

THE WORLD FROM AL-QAEDA'S PERSPECTIVE: DECIPHERING ITS
GEOSTRATEGY, DETERRENCE STRATEGY, AND EFFORTS TO BUILD THE
CALIPHATE

by
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Abstract

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks al-Qaeda has been a forefront national security issue for the United States. This thesis is written by looking at how al-Qaeda perceives the international community and how they make their strategy. It attempts to answer the questions of how al-Qaeda creates their geostrategy and how influential jihad strategists are in this process, if al-Qaeda has a deterrence strategy, and finally can al-Qaeda and other Salafi Jihadist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), attain its goal in establishing the Caliphate.

To answer these questions, a series of different case studies were conducted. In the first chapter an interpretive case study is used to analyze the impact of different jihad strategists on al-Qaeda's geostrategy. In the second chapter two case studies were used that focus on strategic deterrence and dissuasion by denial. The final chapter uses al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS as case studies to evaluate the plausibility of the groups' ability to create the Caliphate.

The findings in each of the chapters helps to decipher and evaluate the effectiveness of al-Qaeda's strategy. The first chapter finds that jihad strategists influence al-Qaeda's post 9/11 geostrategy. The second chapter finds that al-Qaeda uses CBRN for offensive purposes and not for deterrence. However, in rare cases they have used terrorist attacks to deter their enemy. The third chapter argues that while ISIS and AQAP have been able to attain certain characteristics of a state and have been successful in holding influence in their respective areas of operation, it would be very unlikely that ISIS and AQAP will be able to successfully build their Caliphate.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to provide insight into the strategy and goals of al-Qaeda. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States, al-Qaeda has been thrust into the spotlight. Many scholars have looked at the organization and theorized how to eradicate the group. A large amount of literature has been published about the strengths and weakness of the group, as well as different strategies on how to defeat them. What has received less attention from the academic community is al-Qaeda's view of the West and what al-Qaeda's strategists are writing. Additionally, scholars have conducted a lot of research conducted about how to deter the group. Here again, not many scholars have looked at how the group tries to deter the United States and the West from encroachment. Finally, it is the goal of many Salafi jihadist groups, like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to create an Islamic State. Scholars have analyzed and hypothesized whether ISIS has already created a state, but there has been less literature focused on the plausibility of a Salafi jihadist group being able to attain a state in the future. The three chapters clarify and expand on these less researched topics.

The chapters in this thesis are thematically linked by their focus on the strategy and goals of Salafi Jihadists terrorist organizations. Each chapter specifically addresses al-Qaeda, while the third addresses al-Qaeda and ISIS. Importantly, the chapters analyze al-Qaeda through a different lens. Instead of evaluating U.S. counterterrorism policy or Western views of al-Qaeda, the focus of this thesis is too look how the group perceives the West.

Chapter one in this thesis aims to answer the question of how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy and hypothesizes that jihad strategists directly impact the creation of al-Qaeda's geostrategy. In order to discern the impact jihad strategists have made, literature in terrorism studies was studied, as well as the strategic culture paradigm. This literature allowed for the evaluation of how effective jihad strategists' theories are in influencing al-Qaeda affiliates' strategy. The method used in this chapter was an interpretive case study. This allowed the author to analyze a multitude of information and data about al-Qaeda and further develop and challenge the theoretical assumptions made by scholars about al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

The main jihad theorists analyzed in the chapter are Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who wrote *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*; Ayman al-Zawahiri for *Knights Under the Prophets Banner*; Abu Bakr Naji, for *The Management of Savagery*; and lastly Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's video *Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Slaughters an American Infidel*. Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* was chosen not to analyze because the focus is on the formation of al-Qaeda's geostrategy post-September 11, 2001. While Qutb's work heavily influenced al-Qaeda's ideology, the more recent jihad theorists have had a larger impact on the group's geostrategy.

This chapter finds that strategic culture does impact al-Qaeda's geostrategy, and due to al-Qaeda's hierarchical and secretive nature, it is hard for al-Qaeda core to create a geostrategy and implement it throughout its various affiliates. The jihad theorists helped to fill this gap by writing about their life experiences fighting for al-Qaeda and postulating how al-Qaeda can establish an Islamic caliphate. Additionally, one can trace

al-Qaeda strategists' geostrategies to particular affiliates. Each affiliate has a slightly different geostrategy that is exemplified by the differences between its individual strategists. Therefore, understanding the jihad strategists' literature is imperative in understanding al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

The second chapter examines whether al-Qaeda uses dissuasion by denial as their deterrence strategy. The case studies used to determine this is its acquisition of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and its use of terrorism as a deterrence strategy.

In order to evaluate and analyze if al-Qaeda has a deterrence strategy, dissuasion by denial (DND) deterrence literature is researched. Two case studies were used as the method to determine whether DND was executed. The case studies also allow for the author to delve into the two different ways al-Qaeda may try to deter their enemies.

The analysis section examines al-Qaeda's attempts to acquire CBRN and the use of deterrence attacks to determine whether they align with dissuasion by denial strategy. The analysis demonstrates that al-Qaeda has shown that it is willing and believes it has the religious justification to use CBRN weapons against the West. In fact, in the data research every use of CBRN has been for offensive purposes. However, it was shown that al-Qaeda does not use CBRN as a dissuasion by denial tactic. Al-Qaeda has also used terrorist attacks as a means to deter their enemy and change political outcomes. This has had limited success and the example researched in this thesis that supports this assertion is Madrid bombing in 2004.

The final chapter evaluates the plausibility of a Salafi Jihadist group attaining their goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. Salafist Jihadist groups includes al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Salafism maintains that Islam should be practiced as it was during the earliest stages of Islam under the Prophet Mohammad. Jihadism is the idea that Muslims have a duty to practice Jihad, which is religiously sanctioned warfare. Salafi Jihadism is a combination of the two. It takes the jihad approach of violence with the religious adherence to Salafism.¹

This chapter examines ISIS and al-Qaeda's affiliate group in Yemen, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Both of these groups have some characteristics of a state. In order to evaluate whether it has achieved its goal of a caliphate and/or whether it can achieve this goal, literature is researched about the characteristics of a state. There are three main characteristics that a state must have: sovereignty, a political unit, and territory. These characteristics were used this to evaluate ISIS and AQAP.

For my methods section a case study of the two groups was used. The author compares the triumphs of the group to the characteristics needed for a state. Also analyzed was ISIS and AQAP's strengths and weaknesses. The analysis showed that neither group was able to successfully attain the necessary characteristics to form a state nor is it likely that either will be able to do so. Ultimately, ISIS and AQAP had attained certain characteristics of a state, but did not meet the qualifications of statehood.

¹Rashid, Dar and Shadi Hamid. "Islamism, Salafism, and jihadism: A primer | Brookings Institution." Brookings. July 28, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/>.

Chapter 1: The Formation of al-Qaeda's Geostrategy: The Impact of Jihad Strategists

Introduction:

Al-Qaeda has been a forefront issue for the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks. The group has affiliates and exerts influence all around the world, and the United States has spent the past 15 years trying to combat it. Al-Qaeda is a unique organization due to the high literacy level of its membership and its deep seeded ideology. While most terrorist groups are more tactical, al-Qaeda is very prolific and jihad scholars write long books, manuscripts, poems, and doctrine on how to carryout jihad.

This chapter is aimed at discovering whether or not jihad strategists influenced al-Qaeda's geostrategy. Zbigniew Brzezinski notes in his book *The Grand Chessboard* that active geostrategic players are states that have the capacity and the national will to exercise their influence beyond their borders to alter the existing geopolitical state of affairs.² In order to understand al-Qaeda's geostrategy, one must understand their ideology of Salafi Islam or Salafism and their culture. Each has a unique background and upbringing and their contributions have directly impacted the creation of al-Qaeda core's geostrategy. The author further hypothesizes that the difference in geostrategies between

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997) 40

al-Qaeda affiliates and al-Qaeda core can be attributed to the influence of different jihad strategists.

This chapter will start by examining the different bodies of literature produced in this field. Notably, only a few scholars have written about jihad strategists and its impact on geostrategy. After there is a discussion of the methods used to evaluate the different literature written by these jihad strategists and then the theory for the paper will be discussed. The data section will summarize the different jihad strategist literatures. The chapter will end with the analysis section which will discuss the findings, and then the conclusion to recap the proposed hypothesis.

Literature Review

Analyzing how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy is an area in which few scholars have published. A more typical article or monograph produced about al-Qaeda's strategy instead compares al-Qaeda to US or western strategy and analyzes those differences. Instead, this chapter emphasizes how al-Qaeda internally creates its geostrategy and the impact that ideology and jihad strategists have on its geostrategy. Therefore, since few scholars have written about the subject matter this thesis draws from a number of different literature paradigms.

The first paradigm with relevance to this thesis is terrorism studies. In order to understand terrorism studies, it is important to define terrorism. In Bruce Hoffman's seminal book *Inside Terrorism*, he defines terrorism as follows: "All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider 'target audience' that might

include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little. Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale.”³

Terrorist groups can be comprised of a variety of sizes and have varying levels of capabilities, and motives. Interestingly, terrorism studies focuses on a variety of issues including ideological motives, radicalization, and places particular emphasis on combating terrorism. While al-Qaeda uses terrorism as an operational and tactical strategy, the author examines the group from a new angle that does not fit completely within this paradigm. Previous works emphasize understanding al-Qaeda’s ideology, since it is an important motive for the group’s formation and actions. The author instead places more emphasis on understanding how al-Qaeda creates its strategy and the impact that jihad strategists have on its overarching strategy. Furthermore, the chapter aims to decipher the different levels on which geostrategy is present in al-Qaeda.

One paradigm that was useful in developing an understanding of al-Qaeda’s geostrategy and ideology is strategic culture. Alastair Johnston is one of the most prominent and foundational scholars of this paradigm. He argues that states “have predominant strategic preferences that are enrooted in the early formation of the state, and are influenced by philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics of the

³ Bruce Hoffman. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 39-40

state and its elite.”⁴ He also emphasizes analyzing the historical events and trends of a state to understand its strategic culture. This was particularly useful in helping explain al-Qaeda’s ideology. The birth of al-Qaeda can be traced back to 1988 when Osama bin Laden and his top associates met in Pakistan to discuss the birth of the global jihad. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Afghanistan had been in turmoil and was invaded by the Soviet Union; causing stronger tension in the region. The presence of the Soviet Union fueled hatred toward western values, which has stayed at the core of al-Qaeda’s ideology since its inception. Understanding the history of al-Qaeda and the birth of its ideology is imperative in understanding its motives and geostrategy. Where my thesis differs from Johnston’s article is that Johnston argues that only states can have a strategic culture. While al-Qaeda is a non-state actor, I argue that due to globalization, technological advances, and the evolution of conflict, strategic culture now plays a part in developing al-Qaeda’s strategy.

Furthermore, articles that were useful and relevant in the paradigm of strategic culture was written by the Joint Special Operations University titled “Strategic Culture and Strategic Studies: An Alternative Framework for Assessing al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad Movement” and an article by Jerry Long titled “Strategic Culture and Violent Non-State Actors: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Asymmetrical Operations Concepts and Cases: Chapter 2: Strategic Culture, Al-Qaeda, and Weapons of Mass Destruction.” These articles are two of the few published articles that directly related to this thesis.

⁴ Alastair Ian Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” *International Security* Vol. 19, no. 4 (Spring, 1995) 34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539119>

Both emphasized the importance that strategic culture plays in al-Qaeda's strategy, and unlike Johnston, both authors argue that strategic culture impacts more than just the state. The JSOU study notes that while strategic cultural framework has been deemed by some inappropriate when referring to armed groups because they are non-state actors, however over the past two decades there has been a paradigm shift on the causes and conflicts of war.⁵ Because of this, groups like al-Qaeda have enhanced capabilities due to globalization and modern technology, and this allows them to reach both its local and global audience – enabling them to cause geopolitical damage. Comparably, Jerry Long argues that a nation is a more susceptible international relations unit to strategic culture analysis.⁶ One example that Long uses is the discourse between Iraqi Sunni and Shia militants. He explains that they are not merely combatants in a *state's* civil war, but two *nations* who battle each other.⁷ Each faction is culturally different, with its own narratives.

The monograph by JSOU elucidates the importance of understanding strategic culture, and how it sets the boundaries on how a community views the world and conducts its mission.⁸ Additionally, strategic culture also includes professional discourse over strategy, doctrine, operational art, and related issues.⁹ One of the focuses of this

⁵ Ibid., 2

⁶ Jerry M. Long. "Strategic Culture and Violent Non-State Actors: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Asymmetrical Operations Concepts and Cases." Chapter 2. *USAF INSS*, 2008, 17

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ Richard H. Shultz, "Strategic Culture and Strategic Studies: An Alternative Framework for Assessing al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad Movement," *Joint Special Operations University JSOU Report 12-4* (May 2012): 1. http://jsou.socom.mil/Documents/12_4_Shultz_051512_Final.pdf

⁹ Ibid.,

thesis is al-Qaeda's view of the international community, and the method is reading through literature produced by jihad strategists and dissecting its doctrine.

The JSOU article also articulates the importance of understanding Salafi Islam, and how it plays a part in its formation of geostrategy. In the monograph the authors explain that there are three component parts of strategic culture: common experiences, historical narrative, and shared beliefs; threats and challenges to shared beliefs and modes of behavior; and ends and means for protecting beliefs and values and achieving security objectives.¹⁰ Salafi Islam is a central part of al-Qaeda's historical narrative and shared beliefs. Al-Qaeda has spearheaded the resurgence of Salafi Islam in the 20th century and directly tied this fundamentalist pillar of Islam to its ideology and geostrategy. Additionally, in the books and doctrine written by Jihad strategists, quotes and poems from the Quran are widespread.

Ideology plays an integral part in al-Qaeda's strategic culture, and Long echoes this sentiment in his article. Long explains that al-Qaeda practices Salafi Islam because it is taught and implemented as a powerful ethnic marker that trumps state identification.¹¹ Long explains how the classical view of Islam and the role of Jihad emerged from the Abbasid caliphate. During this formation of doctrine, there was a divide between those who believed and those who didn't believe in Islam. As Islam began to spread, the people did not focus on converting the populous, but instead emphasized conveying that Islam

¹⁰ Ibid., 6

¹¹ Jerry M. Long. "Strategic Culture and Violent Non-State Actors: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Asymmetrical Operations Concepts and Cases." Chapter 2. *USAF INSS*, 2008, 18

was the superior religion.¹² During this time Islamic jurists also started to debate the rules of warfare and what constituted a threat against Islam, and the permissibility of collateral damage. Al-Qaeda's formulation of doctrine drew from this classical doctrine. While Usama bin Laden functioned as a mujtahid, a person who gives independent interpretation to Islamic texts, his interpretations were still bound by the historical and religious tradition of the doctrine and the set parameters within which he could move.¹³ Therefore, it is very important to understand the parallels between classical doctrine and al-Qaeda's doctrine, especially when relating to its geostrategy.

As mentioned above, ideology is a crucial motivator for al-Qaeda and understanding its ideology is imperative to understanding its geostrategy. *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World*, written by Gabriel Almond, Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, explains fundamentalism and examines the emergence of fundamentalist right wing groups. Al-Qaeda's ideology, Salafism or Salafi Islam, is a fundamentalist ideology and therefore understanding fundamentalism is central to understanding al-Qaeda's strategic culture. The authors define fundamentalism as, "a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors."¹⁴ This

¹² Ibid., 21

¹³ Ibid., 22

¹⁴ Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 17.

definition describes al-Qaeda's ideology, especially since al-Qaeda aims to call all people to join the global jihad, and have Salafi Islam be the rule of law.

Secularization has been a major structural cause for many fundamentalist groups' emergence. Sunni fundamentalist groups like al-Qaeda add another layer of complexity because they are anti-secular, very nationalistic, and have unified hatred towards the west.¹⁵ In short, al-Qaeda feels its way of life is being threatened by societal advancement. Since most of the advancement is made by the west, its disdain for the west only heightens, which strengthens its ideology.

Theory

This chapter is aimed at discovering how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy and hypothesizes that jihad strategists directly impact the creation of al-Qaeda's geostrategy. The theory used to evaluate the formation of geostrategy is balance of power theory and the caveat of polarization. When deciphering the different literature produced by jihad strategists it became evident that jihad strategists view the world from a very realist point of view. In fact, when reading through its literature there are hints of Cold War rhetoric dispersed throughout the texts. Balance of power theory dictates that once a state becomes too powerful, balancing will occur.¹⁶ This is meant that the opposing force, or pole, will begin to build up capabilities, like their military, to lessen the hegemon's power. Additionally, the international system can be structured as a unipolar world,

¹⁵ Ibid., 122

¹⁶ John J. Mearsheimer. Structural Realism in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* 2nd Edition (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010)77

where one hegemon as a leader, bipolar, where there are two equal opposing forces, and multipolar, where there are three or more influential forces.

The jihad strategists see the world as being bi-polar system, in which jihad is opposing western ideology. Donald Capps wrote an article that discusses how religions groups use the bi-polar model to emphasize two opposing religious expressions.¹⁷ When bi-polar models are based on religion, one group typically believes that their religion is pure and genuine, while the other is contaminated. Furthermore, al-Qaeda believes that they are standing up to the United States' ideology and giving the international community the option to counter the US. Jihad strategists also believe that they will defeat the US and the US will fall. When this happens, they want al-Qaeda to be the opposing force that everyone joins.

Methods

Researching how al-Qaeda forms its geostrategy has been a difficult task since there is minimal literature written by western scholars that summarizes how al-Qaeda creates strategy. One argument that scholars seem to agree on is that al-Qaeda does not produce grand strategy; instead they produce strategy at the local or command level. Therefore, it is important to find the material created by jihad strategists that ultimately creates al-Qaeda's strategy. After doing in-depth contextual and cultural research and reading a multitude of books, articles, and letters written by jihad strategists, there are five strategists who influence al-Qaeda's geostrategy the most. These strategists are: Abu

¹⁷ Donald Capps. "The Research Models and Pedagogical Paradigms in Psychology of Religion." *Review of Religious Research* 21 no. 2 (Spring, 1980), 219 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3509886>

Mus'ab al-Suri, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Bakr Naji, and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. In order to be able to analyze this material effectively, an interpretive case study will be used to dissect the different works produced by the five strategists mentioned earlier.

Germane

Using an interpretive case study as one of the methods allows the author to analyze a multitude of information and data to further develop and challenge the theoretical assumptions made by scholars about al-Qaeda's geostrategy.¹⁸ The benefit of doing a single case study is that one can delve deeply into the case study and develop a strong understanding of the subject matter.¹⁹ A strong and well-researched case study can prove or disprove a hypothesis or theory. In reference to the thesis, the author analyzes how one of the largest Islamic terrorist groups, al-Qaeda, forms its geostrategy. Researching and analyzing how jihad strategists impact al-Qaeda's geostrategy will help decipher how al-Qaeda creates and deploys its geostrategy, and also how it views the international community as a whole. The interpretive case study allows the author to ascertain the jihad strategist's motivations and view of the world, and find the commonalities among different books, doctrine, and strategy.

Data/Doctrine

The data section of this chapter summarizes the different themes of literature produced by jihad strategists. As mentioned earlier, the five jihad strategists that have had

¹⁸ Jerry W. Willis. "Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches." (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2007). doi: <http://dx.doi.org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/10.4135/9781452230108>.

¹⁹ Andrew Bennett. "Case Study Methods: Design, Use, and Comparative Advantages: Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for studying international relations." *University of Michigan*, 2004: 29.

great influence on al-Qaeda's geostrategy: Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who is most known for *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*; Ayman al-Zawahiri for *Knights Under the Prophets Banner*; Abu Bakr Naji, for *The Management of Savagery*; and lastly Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's video *Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Slaughters an American Infidel*. All of these products have helped to create new aspects and theories in al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri

Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar, also known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, is recognized as the leading al-Qaeda theoretician and strategic thinker post September 11, 2001 and is best known for his 1,604-page book *Call to Global Islamic Resistance (GIR)*.²⁰ GIR has reshaped al-Qaeda's strategy post 9/11 and has made al-Suri an integral member in forming al-Qaeda's geostrategy. GIR calls for all Muslims to join the global Jihad and lays out how each person can join and affect the cause. Furthermore, GIR's wide dissemination across jihad websites, forums, and training camps has enabled it to reach all levels of the global jihad and acts as a guide on how jihadis should carry out attacks.

Throughout GIR, al-Suri lays the framework of how jihadis should view and attack the west, placing particular emphasis on the poisons of the United States' ideology and support of Israel. The framework that al-Suri lays out emphasizes that in order to combat the Crusaders, Muslims must create a system, which he named the Global Islamic Resistance system. This system is bound by "a common name and a personal oath to God the Supreme Leader on adhering to Him, a political-judicial program, a common

²⁰ M.W. Zackie. "An Analysis of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Call to Global Islamic Resistance." *Journal of Strategic Security*, 6 no. 1(2013) 1

doctrine, and an oath to God on committing to it, and finally a common goal, which is to resist the invaders and their allies, and an oath to God on jihad in His way to defeat them, then to work on establishing His rule.”²¹ With this overarching framework as the central mission for GIR, al-Suri breaks down the different “units” that make up this one mission.

One of the most influential units that had the largest effect on al-Qaeda’s geostrategy is al-Suri’s military theory of the Resistance Call. He emphasizes that that military theory is based upon two forms of jihad: “the Individual Terrorism Jihad and secret operational activity of small units totally separate from each other, and the Participation in jihad at the Open Fronts.”²² Here, al-Suri created the new strategic concept of individual terrorism that has altered al-Qaeda’s recruitment tactics and geostrategy. He argues that due to al-Qaeda’s hierarchical nature, attracting youths is difficult. His goal for individual terrorism is to produce mass mobilization and participation in jihad.²³ Additionally, the use of individual terrorism helps to create an open front, which is where the influence on geostrategy lies. Al-Suri argues that while individual terrorism can be performed anywhere, the Open Front Jihad depends on strategic preconditions in order for it to succeed.²⁴ These preconditions are: geographic considerations, population, and the political situation in the nation. Only when the conditions for all three factors and variables are met can the Open Front Jihad succeed.

²¹ Ibid., 421

²² Ibid., 371

²³ Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali. "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 1 (2007): 8. doi:10.1080/10576100601049928.

²⁴ Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus‘ab Al-Suri*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 374

Furthermore, al-Suri notes that the priority of areas should be wherever one can hurt the enemy the most and whenever one can rouse Muslims the most and awaken their spirits.²⁵ When trying to attack the Crusaders, al-Suri argues that top targets should include economic targets, diplomatic, economic interests, athletic and tourist, and military bases.²⁶

Ayman al-Zawahiri

Ayman al-Zawahiri is the current amir of al-Qaeda and was the second in command during Usama bin Laden's rule. Al-Zawahiri has influenced al-Qaeda's geostrategy through his book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner* and through multiple videos broadcasted to jihadi followers. Al-Zawahiri lays emphasis that in order to have a successful jihad movement; the global arena needs to "act as an incubator where its seeds would grow and where it can acquire practical experience in combat, politics, and organization matters."²⁷ This also aligns with al-Suri's preconditions for the Open Front. Both strategists argue that these are environments where jihad will prosper the most.

Additionally, al-Zawahiri emphasized the 'far enemy.' Here is where he emphasizes that the enemies are abroad (US and allies), not the 'near enemy.' He blames the Arab and Western media for distorting the images of the Arab Afghans by portraying them as crazed men.²⁸ Al-Zawahiri views the United Nations, Arab rulers, multinational corporations, the internet, international news and satellite media, and international relief

²⁵ Ibid., 393

²⁶ Ibid., pg412

²⁷ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 35

²⁸ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein. "Ayman Al-Zawahiri: The Ideologue of Modern Islamic Militancy." *USAF Counterproliferation Center 21*(2004), 15 <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/awc-cps.htm>

organizations, as the most important targets, since they are the ones distorting the jihad image and are trying to combat al-Qaeda.²⁹ He calls for the jihadis to attack these targets and when doing so to inflict maximum casualties, and concentrate on the method of martyrdom. Additionally, the targets and method of weapons must be chosen to have largest impact and to deter the enemy and stop its brutality.³⁰ Furthermore, al-Zawahiri notes that in order to mobilize the masses to carry out these attacks, the movement needs: “a leadership that they could trust, follow, and understand, a clear enemy to strike, and the shackles of fear and the impediments of weakness in the souls must be broken.”³¹ These are all strategies that al-Zawahiri is employing, which shows insight on how al-Zawahiri views the international community, and the enemies of al-Qaeda.

A letter has been published that al-Zawahiri wrote to al-Zarqawi on October 11, 2005. In his letter al-Zawahiri emphasizes the importance of preparing for the American demise, and how to set up the Jihad in the region. He argues that the mujahedeen must be the nucleus of the region, where tribes, people in positions, scientists, merchants, and people of opinion, could gather and discuss issues.³² Al-Zawahiri notes that the Taliban’s weaknesses are their exclusivity and restricted participation, and that al-Qaeda instead must compel people to join the jihad movement by letting its voice be heard.

Abu Bakr Naji

²⁹ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein. "Ayman Al-Zawahiri's Knights under the Prophet's Banner: The al-Qaeda Manifesto." *Military Review* 85, no. 1 (2005), 83.

³⁰ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 223

³¹ Ibid., 224

³² Ibid., 262

Abu Bakr Naji wrote *The Management of Savagery* in 2004, where he addresses the struggles of the jihad movements and believes that the solution to its failure is to create the Islamic State, or as referred to in his book, the caliphate.³³ He remarks that jihad groups mismanaged resources, recruits and violence.³⁴ He intends to create the caliphate by overthrowing every government and making them subscribe to shariah law. One of Naji's tactics for doing this is to discredit the United States so that Muslims who support them will instead support militant Muslims.

Additionally, Naji suggests a technique of vexation and exhaustion to defeat the enemy.³⁵ The first step of doing this is one must exhaust the forces of the enemy and continue to recruit new youth to work on operations. Naji emphasizes the importance of political action and that the most important political principle is the principle of self-interest.³⁶ He argues that, "There is no eternal enmity in politics and no eternal friendship; rather, there are eternal interests. Therefore, the difference of interests among them is a cause for the bloodiest wars."³⁷

The second is one must ensure that the current regime topples to put the state in near anarchy, or "savagery."³⁸ In fact, this state of chaos described resembles Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*, and his state of nature without a government. With that said, Hobbes

³³ Avner Smith, 2011. "The Management of Savagery." *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center* 4, no. 3, (2011), 31

³⁴ Scott Helfstein. "New Institutionalism and the Evolution of Terrorist Organizations" *Public Administrative Review*. 69 no. 4 (Jul-Aug.,2009). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27697917>

³⁵ Abu Bakr Naji. *The Management of Savagery*. 2004. 37

³⁶ Abu Bakr Naji *The Management of Savagery*. 2004. 38

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ Avner Smith, 2011. "The Management of Savagery." *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center* 4, no. 3, (2011), 31

does argue that the sovereign authority does trump religious motives, which Naji would disagree with.

The final phase of the vexation and exhaustion strategy is the advancement of groups of vexation to be trained physically and psychologically for the final stage of management of savagery.³⁹ Once savagery and chaos erupt, Islamists can enter the area to provide food and medical treatment, security, establish shariah law, and indoctrinate and train the society to fight.⁴⁰ This would help instill the jihad motives and bring the state out of chaos. In addition, all of the attacks are in the hope that America will invade the Middle East. This is where the jihadis will fight and defend their land and religion, and thus will be a propaganda victory.⁴¹ Naji does understand that the jihadis will not be able to defeat a direct military intervention, but in the short term this will cause propaganda victories, and in the long term, the US will begin to splinter.

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi was the former leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq and is best known for his violent and ruthless operational strategy. When al-Zarqawi moved to Afghanistan in 1989 he fell under the guidance of al-Maqdisi. When they both returned to Jordan they were arrested. Throughout his time in jail Zarqawi emerged past his spiritual mentor and left as a ruthless leader.⁴² During his time in Iraq he commanded over a thousand jihadis and was adamant about communicating jihad to the rest of the world.

³⁹ Ibid.,

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

⁴¹ Jarret Brachman and William McCants. "Stealing Al-Qaeda Playbook" *USMA CTC Report*. February 1, 2006, 7 <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/stealing-al-qaidas-playbook>

⁴² George Michael. "The Legend and Legacy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3: *Academic Search Complete*, (2007) 340

Through his propaganda strategy, he was able to mount international media events at the ground level.⁴³ While the other strategists mentioned above used books and doctrine to attract members, al-Zarqawi used the internet. One of his famous videos *Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Slaughters an American Infidel*, shows him beheading an American. These videos escalated the brutality and ruthlessness of the jihad movement. Al-Zarqawi's argument was that this would deter countries from invading the region.⁴⁴

Additionally, al-Zarqawi's most significant geostrategic contribution was he employed massive suicide and bombing campaigns that were meant to instill fear into the infidels. The hope was that these videos would be broadcasted across the web and would incite the Ummah (worldwide Muslim community) to join the movement. In fact, suicide car bombings in Iraq increased from 133 in 2004 to 411 in 2005, and most of these were linked to jihadis inspired by al-Zarqawi.⁴⁵

Al-Zarqawi had a turbulent relationship with al-Qaeda core and knew that because bin Laden was trapped in Pakistan and Afghanistan he would be able to have more independence. With this said, he was still invaluable to al-Qaeda because he was able to successfully recruit and execute operations in the region. Additionally, Al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi did have a close relationship, but al-Zawahiri was worried that al-Zarqawi was too ruthless. In fact, on October 11, 2005 al-Zawahiri wrote a letter to al-Zarqawi explaining al-Qaeda's strategy and its status to the road of jihad. Towards the end of this letter he warns al-Zarqawi about scenes of slaughter and says, "Among the

⁴³ Ibid., 342

⁴⁴ Ibid., 343

⁴⁵ Ibid.,

things which the feeling of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable – also – are the scenes of slaughtering hostages. You shouldn't be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the shaykh of the slaughterers, etc. They do not express the general view of the admirer and the supporter of the resistance in Iraq, and of you in particular by the favor and blessing of God.”⁴⁶ This is particularly important because it not only shows al-Qaeda core's disapproval of slaughter, and since AQI morphed into ISIL, it helps illuminate the fundamental differences between the two groups.

Analysis

The analysis section of this chapter dissects the different literatures mentioned in the Data section. During this section analyze the direct correlation between jihad strategists and al-Qaeda's geostrategy, explain that creation of geostrategy is inherently individualistic in al-Qaeda, and finally that the difference in geostrategies between al-Qaeda affiliates can be linked back to the differences in jihad strategists.

The International System Seen through the Eyes of Jihad Strategists

Before talking about how al-Qaeda forms its geostrategy, it is important to understand how al-Qaeda views the international community. One common characteristic throughout the different literatures mentioned in this chapter and in the theory section of this paper is that the jihad strategists see the world as bi-polar. As previously discussed, this has implications for al-Qaeda's geostrategy because the strategists believe that they

⁴⁶ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 271

are creating a system in which they balance against the United States. By taking this approach al-Qaeda strategists also emphasize the inherent extremism of its ideology.

In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's *Global Islamic Resistance Call* he categorizes people into four different groups based on its beliefs. The first category is *In-Group 1*, the Jihadis. These people are comprised of a limited group of committed jihadists and where al-Suri considers himself. Then there is *In-Group 2*, which is comprised of Muslim Ummah. The two Out-Groups are characterized as *Out-Group 1*, which is the Crusader-West and *Out-Group 2* which are non-Jihadist Muslims.⁴⁷ Al-Suri uses the four groups to depict the different actors in the international community. By characterizing ideology and beliefs into four different groups, al-Suri has created an international community in which one is either jihadi or Muslim Ummah, or in the Out-Group.

In Al-Zawahiri's *Knights Under the Prophets Banner*, the author speaks about the fundamentalist movement and emphasizes that since the assassination of Anwar al Mujahideen (Sadat), there has been an increased resistance against the fundamentalist movement by governments.⁴⁸ Al-Zawahiri explains that there are two powers in play: the first is supported by the United States, the west, Israel, and most Arab Rules; the second depends on God alone and the alignment of jihad movements.⁴⁹ Al-Zawahiri believes that jihad will resist the first power by not only inspiring the hearts of the Muslim youth, but by increasing jihad action to strike and harm any US and Jewish interests. Additionally,

⁴⁷ M.W. Zackie Masoud. "An Analysis of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's "Call to Global Islamic Resistance". *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 1 (2013), 5 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.6.1.1>

⁴⁸ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 108

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 110

he believes that the first powers' motives are to remove Islam from power and keep it away from aspects of life as well as to open up countries to the enemies of Islam, Americans and Jews, through peace agreements and treaties.⁵⁰ Al-Zawahiri went on to say, "It is a battle of ideologies, a struggle for survival, and a war with no truce."⁵¹

Abu Bakr Naji view on polarization is very similar to al-Suri and al-Zawahiri, but he takes his view step further. In his book *The Management of Savagery*, he says, "By polarization here, I mean dragging the masses into the battle such that polarization is created between all the people. Thus, one group of them will go to the side of truth, and another group will go to the side of the people of falsehood, and the third will remain neutral, awaiting the outcome of the battle in order to join the victor. We must attract the sympathy of this group and make it hope for the victory of the people of faith, especially since this group has a decisive role in the later stages of the present battle."⁵² This is important because one of Naji's stated goals is trying to reach out to this population and target them for recruitment.

The implication of understanding how jihad strategists see the world, is that it helps to identify how it is trying to combat the enemy. As seen above by three of the scholars discussed in this paper, the jihad strategists not only view their enemy as America, the west and Israel, but anyone who is not jihad. Al-Suri takes the largest liberty in his groupings since he has four different categories, but in the end, it is still the pure jihadist versus non-Muslims.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 111

⁵¹ Ibid.,

⁵² Abu Bakr Naji *The Management of Savagery*. 2004

Common Jihad Strategies

Al-Qaeda's overarching geostrategy is that in order to establish an Islamic caliphate, it must defeat the United States. By this, it does not mean militarily defeat, as they know that this is unfeasible, but instead its strategy is to "cut the head off the snake, or cutting the wings off." This phrase is a military strategy that has been used by the media and government officials to indicate disabling leadership or key influencers to shorten hostilities.⁵³ It has been used throughout jihad literature and was referenced in letters found in Usama bin Laden's compound. One of the letters that was addressed to Abu Basir said, "America is the head of nonbelievers... if God cuts off the head, the wings will be weakened."⁵⁴ The meaning of this statement is that if al-Qaeda defeats the United States, as they defeated the Soviet Union during the Cold War, western power will weaken, and due to the bipolar nature of the system, Muslims will choose to join the jihad. This thought can also be compared to a reverse domino effect, in which if the west falls, everyone will be more susceptible to join the jihad.

Additionally, al-Suri, al-Zawahiri, and Naji all preached in its literature that one of its geostrategies is to attack America with the aim that America would retaliate and send troops into the region. They all heavily discuss the operating environment that it needs to succeed. For example, the reason why it wants America to come into the region is so that through propaganda campaigns they can show America's brutality and win over the hearts of the people in the region. It also knows its territory, people, and culture better

⁵³ S. Clinton Hinote. "Cutting the Head of the Snake", *Air University*, 26 April 2013, 7
<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a617003.pdf>

⁵⁴ "Letter to Abu Basir." DNI. 6. [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/Letter to Abu Basir.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl2016/english/Letter%20to%20Abu%20Basir.pdf).

than the US. Al-Suri's preconditions for the Open Front come into play here. Individual terrorists can instill fear by a single act, but the open front requires a strategy in order to succeed along with the proper preconditions that al-Suri laid out. First, the location must be favorable to the jihadis. Al-Suri suggests a place that is spacious, difficult to besiege, and mountainous.⁵⁵ Second, the population should have a large number of inhabitants who movements cannot be registered. The youth should also be able to fight and have sources of weapons. Third, the more unrest in the political climate, the more people are susceptible to jihad.⁵⁶ Understanding these conditions are important because this is how al-Qaeda believes jihad will succeed. In fact, al-Suri notes that the best places for the open front are Afghanistan, countries in Central Asia and vicinities that lie behind the river, Yemen, Morocco and North Africa, and the Levant and Iraq.⁵⁷ Al-Qaeda has targeted these areas to exert its influence and in fact, has set up affiliate groups in those regions. This shows the relevance and impact that al-Suri's geostrategy has had on al-Qaeda.

Alternatively, the strategists also stress the importance of striking America's homeland. Al-Zawahiri emphasizes the term 'far enemy' as he believes that it is time to move the front abroad. In his book he says, "We must move the battle to the enemy's ground, to burn the hands of those who ignite fire in our countries."⁵⁸ This aligns with the

⁵⁵ Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 374

⁵⁶ Ibid., 375

⁵⁷ Ibid., 378-379

⁵⁸ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 220

individual terrorist strategy that al-Suri discusses. The hope is by striking the American homeland, they will be able to weaken the regime, and create awareness of the United States' evilness. An example of this strategy's use by al-Qaeda is the attack on September 11, 2001. With this said, al-Zawahiri also states that there are times that it is important to keep the jihad at home and to defend their land and influence.

Furthermore, al-Suri, al-Zawahiri, Naji and al-Zarqawi note the importance of using the internet and media for the call to jihad. They believe they can incite anti-American rhetoric that will force the Americans to withdraw their influence, like the Soviets did during the Cold War. The jihadis will then step in and provide for their people. This is why the creation of online jihad websites and forums has been so influential and so important to al-Qaeda. While the strategists recognize that they will not be able to defeat a direct military confrontation, Naji mentions that if they can exert a strong propaganda campaign, in the short term this will cause propaganda victories, and in the long term, the US will begin to splinter. Interestingly, al-Qaeda sees its propaganda campaign as failing compared to the United States. In numerous literatures, there have been references to the strength of America's media campaign is and the need to combat it more effectively.

Additionally, al-Suri, al-Zawahiri, al-Maqdisi, Naji, and al-Zarqawi all agree that the current regimes in the Middle East need to be toppled since they do not support and enforce jihad. Al-Qaeda see these leaders interact with the international community, and believes they are enablers to America's power. This is seen as a betrayal to jihad. Any dignitary or official who supports the regime is therefore a target. This helps to explain

why al-Qaeda has targeted key figures in nation's governments, and additionally it helps to explain the impact of its ideology. Even though these leaders are Muslim, since are not jihadists, they are enabling the enemy. This belief directly correlates with al-Qaeda's geostrategy to target such leaders in hope that by cutting the head off the snake, the regime will fall. An example of this is the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was an Afghan political and military leader who denounced the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Jihad strategists also agree on common targets that the jihadis should focus on. These targets include the Heads of States, diplomatic figures, economic targets, military bases, sporting events, hotels, the United Nations, and international media organizations.⁵⁹ One can see from the attacks that al-Qaeda has carried out that there is correlation between the targets mentioned in the book and the attacks. Also, one can associate these targets with western values and culture, which the strategists see has a threat to jihad and feel that they must defend jihad.

It is evident that there is a strong correlation between the jihad strategists' literature and al-Qaeda's geostrategy. By examining the theories presented by the different strategists, one can discern that they have altered the way that al-Qaeda acts in the international community, and have created and reaffirmed al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

Individualistic Nature of Geostrategy

After reviewing the different literatures and analyzing its content, one can see the direct correlation between al-Qaeda's geostrategy and these jihad strategists.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 203

Interestingly, this also reveals the individualistic manner in which geostrategy is created in al-Qaeda. Due to the hierarchical and secretive nature of the group, it is hard for the leaders to create strategy and disseminate it to the camps and individuals. This is especially true for Usama bin Laden, who was in hiding since the 9/11 attacks until his death in 2012. Since al-Qaeda leaders are worried that their locations and communications are being tracked by the Intelligence Community, they can only communicate through very secure means, and thus inconvenient. The creations of online forums and magazines such as *Inspire* have helped to spread the message, but it is the jihadi strategist's literature that has made the largest impact in forming al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

Additionally, not only are its publications and doctrine disseminated at various levels of al-Qaeda, but they are written like training manuals. All of the publications are very methodical in their explanations on exactly who to target and which methods to use. They also are filled with poems from other scholars and the Quran. Poetry is an integral part of Islamic culture and can be traced back to the Abbasid Caliphate.⁶⁰ This is important to highlight because it shows how the strategic culture of the jihad plays a part in the strategist's books and article. Moreover, these strategies are disseminated at various levels of the organization so they reach a wide audience.

Correlation between Jihad Strategists and Salafi Jihadist Organizations

After reviewing the different strategists' literature, one can see that certain strategists' geostrategy can be linked to al-Qaeda affiliates' actions. It is, however, more

⁶⁰Faisal Devji. "The Poetry of Al Qaeda and the Taliban." *The New York Times*. May 11, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/13/opinion/sunday/militant-ideals-captured-in-poetry.html?_r=0.

difficult to find direct correlations between the strategies that the theorists purposed and the action taken at the operational level of the group. In fact, some scholars argue that the strategists like to imagine themselves as operational planners for the global jihad, but the decentralization of the organization makes it harder to see clear-cut correlations between the strategies of the theorist and actual operations carried out by the group.⁶¹ As Daveed Gartenstein-Ross said in his recent article, “Jihadist groups rarely, if ever, wholesale re-embrace their strategists of yesteryear. Rather, these strategists’ principles might be re-examined, and applied in new ways to new circumstances.”⁶² Because of this, al-Qaeda and their affiliates are influenced by evolving strategic through.⁶³

Perhaps the most influential jihad theorist who impacted al-Qaeda geostrategy was Abu Mus’ab al-Suri. Two of al-Qaeda’s large attacks in the mid-2000s were connected with al-Suri’s doctrine. Both the Madrid bombing and London attacks were executed in the same matter that al-Suri outlined in the GIR on how to build cells. He believed that participation in society should be an active individual with a security, cultural, and religious eligibility to influence a wide circle of friends.⁶⁴ In regards to the Madrid bombing, Tunisian immigrant Sahrane Fahket and Moroccan immigrant Jamal Zougam built their own cell in Madrid. Fahket was a real estate agent and Zougam ran a

⁶¹ Mark Stout, “In Search of Salafi Jihadist Strategic Thought: Mining the Worlds of the Terrorist. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32(10). October 2009: 12

⁶² <https://warontherocks.com/2016/11/how-will-jihadist-strategy-evolve-as-the-islamic-state-declines/>

⁶³ Mark E. Stout, Jessica M. Huckabey, John R Schindler, Jim Lacey. The Terrorism Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of al-Qaeda and Associated Movements. *Naval Institute Press*. Annapolis Maryland. Pg 131.

⁶⁴ Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali. "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 1 (2007): 10. doi:10.1080/10576100601049928.

mobile phone shop.⁶⁵ In regards to the London bombing, Mohammed Khan was a primary school teacher who drew three young students into a jihadist cell.⁶⁶

In al-Suri's GIR, he also emphasized the model of individual jihad or individual terrorism. This is the idea that individual terrorism needed to replace the hierarchical organization of the group. This is an approach that ISIS has taken in its effort to build a Caliphate. ISIS has continually emphasized the importance of lone-wolf attacks. In order to encourage these types of attacks ISIS strategists even put a *Just Terrorism Tactic* section in its publication *Rumiyah*, which outlines different ways a citizen can conduct an attack.

The use of brutality by exhibited by al-Zarqawi's and how it has been incorporated as a main characteristic of the Islamic State. As mentioned earlier, al-Zawahiri warned al-Zarqawi against the increased use of brutality. Al-Zarqawi was the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and urged and used tactics that were much more graphic and violent. After al-Zarqawi was killed al-Baghdadi replaced him and created ISIL. This is one of the most fundamental differences between ISIS and al-Qaeda. Although, he did help transform al-Qaeda's geostrategy by increasing the use of suicide bombings as a tactical strategy. This has been widely used since 9/11.

Additionally, Abu Bakr Naji deviated from al-Qaeda core's geostrategy. In the "Management of Savagery" Naji speaks about how to create a state of savagery and

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

promotes using attacks in other regions to relieve the pressure on jihadist safe havens.⁶⁷

Naji also emphasizes manipulating and using the media. One can see correlation between the cities that ISIS has taken and Naji's strategy.

Alternatively, the literature produced by al-Zawahiri fits al-Qaeda's core's overall geostrategy. In regards to Zawahiri, it is indicative that his geostrategy is at the heart of al-Qaeda core since he replaced Usama bin Laden as the emir after his death. When he wrote *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, it was while he was still second in command. In his book, Zawahiri emphasized that a jihadist movement needs an arena that acts as an incubator. He argues here that jihadism needs to be kept separately from nationalism. He also called for random acts of violence by individuals in America. What sets Zawahiri apart from some of the other theorists is his emphasize on attacking the far enemy. Many of the other jihad theorists focus on building an operating environment that is conducive for jihad. Instead Zawahiri focuses on trying to attack the 'far enemy' in hopes that they will be filled with fear and leave their area of control.

In 2010 bin Laden wrote to Atiyatullah al-Libi that the purpose for "the purpose is for the *mujahideen* publications to be a good potential for the competition and to gain the crowds."⁶⁸ By this bin Laden emphasizes that the goal is to spread awareness amongst the people of the nation, and to keep and foster the support of their followers. As noted by Dr. Stout in his article, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb called for building bridges to the

⁶⁷ Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman. "Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debate and Divisions within al-Qa'ida and its Periphery." *Combatting Terrorism Center*. December 16, 2010. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Self-Inflicted-Wounds.pdf>

⁶⁸ Leo J. Blanken, Hy S. Rothstein, and Jason J. Lepore. 2015. *Assessing War: The Challenge of Measuring Success and Failure*. 244

people of Mali. This again reiterates the need and goal of awakening and educating the people.⁶⁹

Conclusion

It is evident that these jihadi strategists have had an impact on al-Qaeda's post 9/11 geostrategy. By dissecting the different literatures produced by the strategists it became evident that strategic culture impacted its geostrategy. Furthermore, due to al-Qaeda's decentralization and secretive nature, it is hard for al-Qaeda's core to create a geostrategy and implement it at the various levels of the group. These jihad strategists help to fill this gap by writing about their life experiences and how al-Qaeda can establish an Islamic caliphate.

Additionally, one can postulate that the creation of geostrategy is inherently individualistic. Al-Qaeda's geostrategy is an all-encompassing formation of the different literatures discussed above. While al-Qaeda core leader's ideology, like Usama bin Laden's, play a role, due to bin Laden isolation and the secretiveness of the organization it is hard to disseminate geostrategy to the entire organization, and therefore the creation of geostrategy becomes individualistic.

Furthermore, due to the individualism involved in creating geostrategy, one can trace al-Qaeda strategists' geostrategies to certain actions and groups. With the strategists mentioned above, there is a correlation with different affiliate's geostrategy. Each affiliate has a slightly different geostrategy that is exemplified by the differences between

⁶⁹ Ibid.,

its individual; strategists. Therefore, understanding the jihad strategists' literature is imperative to understanding al-Qaeda's geostrategy.

The implications of understanding jihad strategist's publications are that one can now conceptualize and understand how al-Qaeda forms its geostrategy. Additionally, one can comprehend the impact of its ideology as the main driver for its hatred towards the United States. Al-Qaeda has made great strides in understanding how the United States creates its strategy. Understanding how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy helps us understand its motives, and how best to counter them. Moreover, while this subject has not been widely researched, with the recent declassification of Usama bin Laden's bookshelf by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the Harmony Project at the Counter Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, scholars will now be able to do a more in-depth study of how al-Qaeda thinks and forms strategy.

Chapter 2: Deciphering al-Qaeda's Deterrence Strategy

Introduction

Deterrence conjures images of the Cold War and nuclear weapons. Rarely is deterrence connected with a violent non-state actor (VNSA) group. Most research on deterrence and VNSAs tend to focus on how state actors can deter a VNSA. Few, however, have examined the opposite—how VNSA might try to deter their state adversaries. In this chapter the author aims to determine whether al-Qaeda uses dissuasion by denial as a deterrence strategy. The author hypothesizes that al-Qaeda does use dissuasion by denial as their deterrence strategy.

Al-Qaeda is a powerful group with vast influence in Near East and South Central Asia. It is unique because its leaders are highly educated and very rational and strategic thinkers. Part of its recruitment and training includes reading United States publications on strategy. Al-Qaeda's leaders take pride in understanding how Americans think, and believe that we act in our own best interest to promote our power and influence in the international community.⁷⁰ Deciphering whether al-Qaeda uses dissuasion by denial as a deterrence strategy is important because it gives insight into what means they use to try to deter them.

This chapter determines whether al-Qaeda engages in dissuasion by deterrence (DND) by using two case studies. Deterrence theory at its basic level involves the use of threats to convince adversaries to refrain from taking particular actions by conveying to

⁷⁰ Jim Lacey, *The Canons of Jihad: Terrorist's Strategy for Defeating America*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008. 70

them that the costs and risks of such actions outweigh the potential benefit.⁷¹ Dissuasion by denial, is a method used for “detering an action by having the adversary see a credible capability to prevent him from achieving potential gains adequate to motive the action.”⁷² Using this theory the author hypothesizes that the group uses terrorism as a tactic to deter its adversaries.

The proceeding section of my thesis discusses deterrence literature, specifically as it pertains to dissuasion by denial and different methods that al-Qaeda could use to try to deter their adversaries. The two case studies used to determine whether al-Qaeda does use DND are al-Qaeda’s attempts to attain CBRN weapons and as the use of terrorist attacks to deter their adversaries.

In the conclusion, an overview is given on whether al-Qaeda deters its adversaries, as well as a discussion on the implications of understanding al-Qaeda’s deterrence strategy. Knowing where al-Qaeda weaknesses lay can help the US deter future attacks.

Literature Review

The literature discussed in this section is on dissuasion by denial and argues that deterring an action by having the adversary see a credible capability to prevent him from achieving potential gains adequate to motivate the action.”⁷³

⁷¹ DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY FORT BELVOIR VA, and Heuring, Terry C. 2001. *Non-Nuclear Strategic Deterrence of State and Non-State Adversaries Potential Approaches and Prospects for Success*.
<http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?&verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA459871>. 3

⁷² Paul K. Davis, “Toward Theory for Dissuasion (Or Deterrence) by Denial: Using Simple Cognitive Models of the Adversary to Inform Strategy.” *RAND*. January 2014: 2
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/WR1000/WR1027/RAND_WR1027.pdf

⁷³ Ibid., 2

Dissuasion by Denial

Since the end of the Cold War, deterrence strategy no longer only pertains to trying to deter WMDs. This is due to a number of contributing factors such as globalization and the increased capabilities of non-state actors. These changes have brought the international community into a new era of deterrence strategy in which deterrence is not just between nuclear states. Increased technologies give terrorist groups a greater capability to cause a much greater impact. With this said, even as deterrence strategy has morphed to include VNSA groups, commonalities still exist between traditional deterrence strategy and 21st century deterrence strategy, where deterrence is no longer relevant to solely states and based on nuclear weapons.

Dissuasion was brought to the spotlight in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review where one of the defense strategies was to “dissuade other countries from initiating future military competitions.”⁷⁴ Since then, the concept of dissuasion has been used in many subsequent documents and has evolved. Dissuasion by denial (DND) is “detering an action by having the adversary see a credibly capability to prevent him from achieving potential gains adequate to motivate the action.”⁷⁵ Notably the definition of DND emphasizes what the adversary “sees” and how they regard the capability as “credible.” These terms avoid basing the judgement of the actor on the rational-actor theory.⁷⁶ Additionally, DND does not stand alone and must incorporate elements of deterrence by

⁷⁴ United States. 2001. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. [Washington, D.C.]: Dept. of Defense. <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS18834>. 12

⁷⁵ Paul K. Davis, “Toward Theory for Dissuasion (Or Deterrence) by Denial: Using Simple Cognitive Models of the Adversary to Inform Strategy.” *RAND*. January 2014: 2
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/WR1000/WR1027/RAND_WR1027.pdf 2

⁷⁶ Ibid,

threat of punishment.⁷⁷ This is the idea that if the adversary will be prevented from achieving its gains for fear or punishment or reprisal.

An integral part of DND is the threat of punishment must be associated with an adversary's noncompliance. In order for the threat to work, it must be credible. Having weapons and sufficient lethal capability is one way to attain this.⁷⁸ This is further explained in Thomas Schelling's idea of mutual deterrence. Another way to ensure threat of punishment is based on the adversary having fear, and understanding the costs associated with certain actions. Here is where the credibility of the threat is crucial. The adversary must believe that the deterrer has the credibility and intent to take action.

Mutual deterrence is one way that deterrers try to deter an adversary by showing a credible capability equivalent to their own. Thomas C. Schelling is one of the leading scholars on deterrence strategy and argues this. Schelling believes that, "mutual deterrence is considered the more stable, the less susceptible it is to political and technological events, information and misinformation, accidents, alarms, and mischief that might upset it."⁷⁹ In order to keep the status quo, an adequate number of weapons and military capabilities must exist on both sides. Schelling also argues that military strategy is in fact a bargaining strategy since it involves the potential use of force more than the actual use of force.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., 5

⁷⁸ A. Wess Mitchell, "The Case for Deterrence by Denial" *The American Interest*. August 12, 2015. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/08/12/the-case-for-deterrence-by-denial>

⁷⁹ Thomas C. Schelling, "The Future of Arms Control." *Operations Research* 9, no. 5 (1961): 723.

⁸⁰ Schelling. 1961. 726.

In order to effectively implement DND, the RAND study suggested that there are four main criteria that help the adversary overcome cognitive biases. The first is to dramatize in diplomacy and public statements the worst-case outcome if the adversary were to commit the action.⁸¹ The second is to dissuade the adversary by elevating the plausibility of good outcomes under other options. The third is to undercut the plausibility of the best-outcome scenario. One way to do this is by demonstrating resolve. The final criteria is to make the expected outcome more costly by increasing the likelihood of retaliation.⁸² Notably not all of these DND criteria's may be fitting for all situations. For example, undercutting the best possible outcome may not be effective in certain situations.

Coercive strategy also is a part of DND and involves the manipulation of an adversary by threatening retaliation if behavior is not adjusted.⁸³ In order for deterrence to work, however, one group needs to persuade the other that the status quo should be maintained. Notably, this would imply that for this to be effective, both actors would have to be of the same rationality. Additionally, even if they were of the same rationality, one actor could misread a sign and deterrence could fail.⁸⁴ Terrorist organizations are rational actors. However, a state actor and a terrorist organization are not of the same rationality and therefore, coercive strategy could be difficult to employ.

⁸¹Paul K. Davis, "Toward Theory for Dissuasion (Or Deterrence) by Denial: Using Simple Cognitive Models of the Adversary to Inform Strategy." *RAND*. January 2014: 13

⁸² *Ibid.*, 14

⁸³Lawrence Freedman. *Deterrence*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004: 26

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*,

Also noteworthy is that the theory deterrence by denial, aligns with DND. This theory is often used interchangeably with dissuasion by denial. Deterrence by denial is defined by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as persuading the enemy to not attack because they do not have a chance at winning, and will not be able to achieve its operational goals.⁸⁵ Deterrence by denial is also not only limited to nuclear weapons. The theory applies to any capability that can deter an enemy from achieving its objectives.⁸⁶ This aligns with the DND definition provided by RAND.

Other deterrence theories that are similar to dissuasion by deterrence are internalized deterrence and generalized deterrence. Internalized deterrence occurs when deterrence is not deliberately applied as a strategy, but succeeds because of self-induced fear of the consequences of the adversary if something were to happen. Conversely, generalized deterrence is, “an institutional perception by a state or group of states that, despite continuing antagonism, it should not expect to be able to resolve its disputes with another state or group of states by military means.”⁸⁷ This implies that the state being deterred is willing to accept the vital interest of the deterrer and maintain the status-quo. The longer this acceptance lasts, the greater the stability of the situation.⁸⁸ When political factors change, the stability can change as well. Because of this, deterrence is a norm and

⁸⁵ David S. Yost. “Debating Security Strategies.” *NATO Review*. Winter. 2003
<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/issue4/english/art4.htm>

⁸⁶ Ibid.,

⁸⁷ Ibid., 42

⁸⁸ Ibid.,

the fear of consequences for a specific action is embedded. Before a state would have to repeatedly announce their desires to the challenger, but now this is no longer the case.⁸⁹

Finally, since this chapter aims to answer the question of whether al-Qaeda has a deterrence strategy, it is important to see how deterrence is defined in Arabic. There is very little literature on what deterrence means in Arabic and to Islamic extremists.

Deterrence in Sunni Islamist writing uses the Arabic word *rad'a*. In regards to Sunni Islamists *rad'a* has two main meanings.⁹⁰ The first is that it is used as a western concept of deterrence. This aligns with the use of force by one party to convince another party or refrain from taking a certain action. The second aligns with dissuasion by denial deterrence, where it brings the adversary to desist from actions that is it already taking or to rollback its action through threat of retaliation.⁹¹

An operational doctrine written by Sheikh Munir al-Ghadban's, who was the leader of the Shura Council in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, characterizes deterrence by defense against the enemy's capability.⁹² This aligns with the dissuasion by denial definition. However, many Salafi jihadist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood believe that "it is not enough to respond to the enemy after an attack, but believes that deterrence through punishment is not credible unless the enemy has previously experienced Muslim force."⁹³ This falls under the category of pre-emptive deterrence.

⁸⁹ Richard J. Harknett. *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (2005): 313.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202526>.

⁹⁰ Shmuel Bar. "Deterrence Theory in Arab and Muslim Thought." June 2012. https://hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1450/deterrence_theory_in_arab_and_muslim_thought_shmuel_bar.pdf 3

⁹¹ Ibid., 4

⁹² Ibid., pg 5

⁹³ Ibid., 5

Pre-emptive deterrence was added to the National Security Strategy after September 11, 2001. The concept states that when deterrence may fail and war may come with little warning, and therefore a pre-emptive action may be needed to avoid war. Pre-emptive punishment is only used when one thinks that the enemy is going to strike.⁹⁴ Preventive war involves military operations to avert a possible future risk. Pre-emptive punishment is a very controversial policy, which the U.S. used to go into Iraq in 2003. With this said, critics of pre-emptive punishment argue that there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein was about to attack the US or transfer WMDs to terrorists.⁹⁵

Theory

Determining whether al-Qaeda has a deterrence strategy helps to understand al-Qaeda's defensive strategy and where it believes their enemies weaknesses lay. Knowing this allows them to be able to influence their enemy on a grander scale. Examining deterrence theory can help to give further insight into why al-Qaeda chooses certain courses of actions as part of their strategy. For example, its desire to obtain chemical weapons is to show a credible capability, while the execution of certain strategic terrorist attacks, like the Madrid bombing, are meant to show recourse for an action taken against the group. Furthermore, due to globalization the world is now more interconnected and traditional deterrence theory is not applicable to all situations. Non-state actors have an increasingly important role in the liberal world order. By evaluating how al-Qaeda deters its enemies, it allows better insight into the overarching strategy of the group.

⁹⁴ David S. Yost. "Debating Security Strategies." *NATO Review*. Winter. 2003
<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/issue4/english/art4.htm>

⁹⁵ Ibid.,

Methods

To analyze al-Qaeda's dissuasion by denial deterrence strategy, two case studies are utilized. The first case study is al-Qaeda's use of CBRN weapons and the second is al-Qaeda's use of tactical strategy of terrorism to deter its adversary

While conducting the case studies, congruence procedures, which is a process-tracing methodology to analyze the information, were used.⁹⁶ This was particularly useful because it allowed for the comparison of al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy to the literature findings. This also allowed the author to find the similarities and differences in al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy and state actors. There is also multiple within-case comparisons to show how al-Qaeda conducts each of the deterrence strategies.

Data

Use of CBRN

Since al-Qaeda's inception the group has been trying to increase its power and capability to cause violence. Al-Qaeda's desire to acquire CBRN weapons is directly related to this effort. Al-Qaeda is a unique group that has many scholars debating its rationality when it comes to the use of force. Some scholars believe that members of al-Qaeda's leadership are irrational actors, while some believe that they are rational. Other scholars focus more on how to make a credible threat of retaliation if al-Qaeda does use a weapon of mass destruction and are less concerned with the rationality of its leadership.⁹⁷ Al-Qaeda's overall strategy of jihad is geared towards using religious justification for

⁹⁶Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (1997). 58

⁹⁷John Stone. "Al Qaeda, Deterrence, and Weapons of Mass Destruction." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 9 (2009): 763 doi:10.1080/10576100903109693.

political outcomes.⁹⁸ The importance of this is that while al-Qaeda will act to promote jihad and the defense of Islam, there is also a sense of irrationality and unpredictability when it comes to al-Qaeda's attacks.

The late Usama bin Laden and current emir of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri's goal is to build a caliphate that is powerful enough to withstand the West and its enemies. Al-Zawahiri in his book, the *Knights Under the Banner Prophet*, says "If the successful operation against Islam's enemies and the severe damage inflicted on them do not serve the ultimate goal of establishing the Muslim nation in the heart of the Islamic world, they will be nothing more than disturbing acts, regardless of their magnitude, that could be absorbed and endured, even if after some time and with some losses."⁹⁹ Therefore, the use of force must be applied strategically in the best interest of the political outcome.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in order for al-Qaeda to use CBRN weapons as a deterrent, it must be done so that supports the political outcome of promoting jihad and creating an Islamic caliphate. This was also emphasized in the two fatwas that were issued on weapons of mass destruction. In 1998, Usama bin Laden issued a fatwa that openly declared war on the United States and stated that it was his Islamic duty to acquire weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰¹ Bin Laden declared that the sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war. While Bin Laden did not have the proper authority to issue this fatwa,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 764

⁹⁹ Laura Mansfield, *In His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri*. (TLG Publications, 2006) 215.

¹⁰⁰ John Stone. 765

¹⁰¹ Rolf Mowatt-Larssen,. "Al Qaeda's Religious Justification of Nuclear Terrorism." <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/18012/uploads>

by doing this he became the public mastermind of al-Qaeda, and provided religious justification for causing mass casualties of Americans. This also helped to lay the religious groundwork for 9/11. In fact, after 9/11 al-Zawahiri said in reference to 9/11, “this was not just a human achievement – it was a holy act.”¹⁰² This fatwa became a top priority for Bin Laden’s lieutenants in the following years.

In 2003, Saudi Cleric Nasir Bin Hamd Al-Fadh issued a fatwa on the use of weapons of mass destruction. Al-Fadh justified the use of WMDs on two grounds. The first is on the principle of reciprocity. He argues that the US aggression towards Muslims have caused over 10 million deaths, and therefore the use of WMDs are justified.¹⁰³ The second principle is that jihad supersedes all other considerations. Al-Fadh concludes the fatwa by saying that if using WMD is the only way to meet the jihad, then it is acceptable to use them, even if collateral damage is the case.¹⁰⁴

The importance of the fatwas is that it laid the framework for al-Qaeda to be able to use and pursue WMDs. It was evident that its acquisition of CBRN was no longer intended for defensive purposes. Even though WMDs are outlawed under Islam, they were justified because they countered US hegemony. The fatwas also showed al-Qaeda commitment to attaining weapons of mass destruction because they would help to destroy

¹⁰² Ibid.,

¹⁰³ J. Stone pg 767

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,

the global status-quo and apostate regimes, and would create conditions which were more conducive for jihad.¹⁰⁵

Al-Qaeda's quest to attain nuclear weapons is a testament to its ideology and overall strategy. Acquiring nuclear weapons would be the key tool in al-Qaeda's arsenal because it would level the playing field with its state adversaries. It could serve as both a deterrent and an offensive tactic and would enhance the political posture of al-Qaeda because it would discourage intervention for fear of a nuclear weapon attack reprisal. In fact, Usama bin Laden said in an interview with a Pakistani journalist on November 7, 2001, "I wish to declare that if America used chemical or nuclear weapons against us, then we may retort with chemical and nuclear weapons. We have the weapons as a deterrent."¹⁰⁶ In fact, al-Qaeda efforts to attain weapons of mass destruction started off as a deterrent and defensive weapon for possible U.S. aggression within its area of operation, particularly in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ This policy of using weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent quickly evolved to using WMDs as an offensive weapon.

Another contributing factor in al-Qaeda's use of CBRN weapons is its dependence on the media. The more dramatic the event is, the more publicity they will receive and the more they can promote the call to jihad. Conversely, if they go too far in

¹⁰⁵ Rolf Mowatt-Larsen. "Al-Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?" Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center. January 2010 <http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/al-qaeda-wmd-threat.pdf>. 5

¹⁰⁶ Rolf Mawatt-Larssen, "Al Qaeda's Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Policy* January 25, 2010, , accessed July 19, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/25/al-qaedas-pursuit-of-weapons-of-mass-destruction/>.

¹⁰⁷ Sammy Salama and Lydia Hansell. 2005. "Does Intent equal Capability? Al-Qaeda and Weapons of Mass Destruction". *The Nonproliferation Review*. 12(3): 615-653 <https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/npr/123salama.pdf>

the eyes of the public, they will receive backlash, which could hurt its mission and ideology. Therefore, Al-Qaeda strives to find the balance of physical and psychological coercion.¹⁰⁸ This tactic can be traced back to the 19th century anarchist's notion of *propaganda par le fait* in which revolutionaries employed symbolic violence to incite revolution.¹⁰⁹

Trying to develop CBRN weapons has been important to al-Qaeda since the inception of the group. Since the early 1990's al-Qaeda core has kept the procurement of CBRN weapons at a very close hold away from lower levels of the organization.¹¹⁰ In the acquisition of CBRN al-Qaeda facilitates the top-down approach. Interestingly al-Qaeda has never carried out a nuclear or biological attack. Instead, al-Qaeda has acquired chemical weapons and explosive technology and carried out only a handful of chemical weapons attacks.¹¹¹ The first chemical weapons attack facilitated by al-Qaeda was in 1993 when the group detonated a car bomb filled with cyanide gas at the World Trade Center, killing five people.¹¹² Subsequent chemical weapons attacks have been dispersed all across the world, although primarily in the Middle East and Europe. In 1993 to early 1994 al-Qaeda tried to acquire uranium in Sudan for a nuclear device. In 1999-2001 al-

¹⁰⁸ David S. Jonas and Christopher Swift. *Reforming the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime: Al-Qaeda, Global Terrorism, and the Rouge State Paradigm*. pg 362

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.,

¹¹⁰ Rolf Mawatt-Larssen, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/25/al-qaedas-pursuit-of-weapons-of-mass-destruction/>.

¹¹¹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=bar&chart=weapon&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&ctp2=all&perpetrator=20029,20030,20493,20522,20032,40325,20033,20496,20492,20494&weapon=1,2,6,4,3

¹¹² Rolf Mawatt-Larsen. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/25/al-qaedas-pursuit-of-weapons-of-mass-destruction/>

Qaeda created training camps led by Abu Khabab al-Masri, who was a chemist and bomb-maker as well as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who was a leading al-Qaeda strategist.¹¹³ In these camps they also trained members about CBRN. It was said that these courses covered chemical, biological, and radiological basic training courses for hundreds of extremists.¹¹⁴

One notable chemical attack carried out by al-Qaeda in the early 2000s is the attack in a residential housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. On November 8, 2003 near the city of Riyadh, perpetrators launched an armed intrusion and detonated 3 bombs. It is believed that al-Qaeda administered the attack, but it is not officially confirmed. There were 17 fatalities and 122 injured.¹¹⁵

Furthermore, there were several failed attempts of al-Qaeda using chemical weapons. In June 2002, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who was the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, conducted crude chemical and biological training and experiments in a remote area in northeast Iraq.¹¹⁶ In 2003, al-Zarqawi and his affiliates in London tried to use ricin and cyanide in the London Underground. In April 2004, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) tried to detonate several trucks filled with chemical explosives in Jordan outside of the General Intelligence Department (GID). If successfully detonated, fatalities could have reached

¹¹³ Ibid.,

¹¹⁴ Rolf Mowatt-Larsen. "Al-Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?" Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center. January 2010 <http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/al-qaeda-wmd-threat.pdf>. 13

¹¹⁵ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2016). Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200311080004>

¹¹⁶ Rolf Mowatt-Larsen. "Al-Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?" Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center. January 2010 <http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/al-qaeda-wmd-threat.pdf>. 22

20,000 people.¹¹⁷ After the attacks there were protests and media backlash, which caused al-Zarqawi (the leader of AQI at the time) to denounce the attacks as AQIs.¹¹⁸ In 2002 videos surfaced showing al-Qaeda experimenting with chemical weapons (CW) at its Darunta camp near Jalalabad in Afghanistan. The gas featured in the video was expected to be sarin. There were formulas of sarin found at the camp.¹¹⁹

In March to May 2003, al-Qaeda senior operative Abu Bakr was in communication with an Iran-based al-Qaeda senior leader to try and purchase three purported “Russian nuclear devices.”¹²⁰ There is no indication that al-Qaeda acquired these nuclear devices.

It is suspected that in 2007 al-Qaeda in Iraq launched more than a dozen chlorine suicide bomb attacks in Baghdad, which killed 32 people and poisoned over 600 Iraqis.¹²¹ It is also suspected that AQI carried out these attacks, even though AQI denied the involvements.¹²² The targets of the attacks were Sunni Muslims and former insurgents to the Islamic Army in Iraq. AQI did admit to the downing of a Marine CH-46 transport helicopter in Karma, which was also where a chlorine bomb factory was discovered in February 21, 2007.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Beacham Publishing's TRAC (Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium); *Biological / Chemical / Agricultural Terrorism*; al Qaeda; <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/biological-chemical-agricultural-terrorism/al-qaeda>; accessed Monday, July 18th, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Notably, al-Zarqawi was held prisoner in Jordan and released in 1998.

¹¹⁹ Bill Roggio “Iraq Breaks up al-Qaeda Chemical Weapons Cell” *Long Wars*. June 1 2013. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/iraq_breaks_up_al_qa.php

¹²⁰ Rolf Mowatt-Larsen. “Al-Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?” Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center. January 2010 <http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/al-qaeda-wmd-threat.pdf>. 26

¹²¹ Ibid.,

¹²² Ibid.,

¹²³ Bill Roggio. “Another Chlorine Truck Bomb Found Near Ramadi” *Long War Journal* March 27, 2007. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/03/another_chlorine_tru.php

More recently in 2013 the Iraqi military arrested five al-Qaeda cell members that were seeking to manufacture chemical weapons, including sarin nerve gas. It is believed that they were plotting attacks in Iraq, Europe, and North America.¹²⁴ The cell was seeking to produce sarin as well as distilled mustard, which is a blistering agent. Notably the group had acquired some of the precursors need to develop CW. In the same report, it was also mentioned that the al Nusra Front for the People in the Levant, which is al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, had acquired sarin gas.

Use of Terrorist Attacks

Jihad theorists and al-Qaeda members argue that terrorism can be used as a means of deterrence. The main proponents of this theory are Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Abu Bakr Naji. Both have dedicated sections of their books on how to deter the enemy.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri is label one of the most important strategists and theorist of al-Qaeda. In al-Suri's book *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, he addresses the strategy of deterrence with terrorism. The theory behind using terrorism as a deterrent is that the attack will instill enough fear into the enemy that they will not want to engage with al-Qaeda. In his book he says, "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the case of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly. (Al-Anfal 8:60).¹²⁵ This provides the

¹²⁴ Bill Roggio "Iraq Breaks up al-Qaeda Chemical Weapons Cell" *Long Wars*. June 1 2013. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/iraq_breaks_up_al_qa.php

¹²⁵ Brynjar Lia. *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 413

religious justification for the attacks. Furthermore, al-Suri emphasizes that it is the duty of the jihad movement to deter those who inflict harm on Muslims.¹²⁶ One of the most important passages on al-Suri's deterrence theory is when he says,

Generally, most of our enemies, the supporters of the American invasion, and especially the apostates, the agents, the hypocrites, the corrupted, and those bragging about their so-called culture and development are a group of cowardly rats, starting from the biggest of their kings, presidents, and princes, and to the smallest of their writers, their media figures and their sycophants with all their fantasies...Most of them will be deterred if one sets an example by striking or severely punishing a few of them. Then, most of them will withdraw from confrontation.¹²⁷

Here is the heart of al-Qaeda's deterrence theory of using terrorism as a means to deter the US. Al-Qaeda believes that terrorist attacks can instill fear into the population and cause the public to want to withdraw from the region. Then, al-Qaeda can institute the Islamic caliphate and promote jihad.

Abu Bakr Naji also wrote about deterrence strategy in his book *The Management of Savagery*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *The Management of Savagery* is aimed at creating a caliphate by using the technique of vexation and exhaustion to overthrow every government and make them subscribe to shariah law.¹²⁸ During this process, the nation will enter into a state of savagery. While in the state of savagery Naji believes that some groups of vexation will unite into a single entity in order to manage different regions of savagery. This is important because the group must balance between

¹²⁶ Ibid., 414

¹²⁷ Ibid.,

¹²⁸ Abu Bakr Naji. *The Management of Savagery*. 2004. 37

concentrating in one place so enemies will be deterred from encroachment, while also simultaneously trying to expand its territory and influence.

Additionally, during the administration of savagery Naji describes how the enemy will “pay the price.”¹²⁹ He extensively goes into this strategy and argues that during the administration of savagery, the enemy will be deterred and be made to think “one thousand times” before attacking regions managed by a regime of the administration of savagery.¹³⁰ Naji outlines this by saying, “it is best if those that undertake operations of ‘paying the price’ are other groups in the regions against which no hostility has been directed...Among the most important benefits is making the enemy feel that he is surrounded and that his affairs are exposed. If the enemy undertakes a hostile action against a region in the Arabian Peninsula or in Iraq, then the response will occur in Morocco or Niger or Indonesia.”¹³¹ This is to show the areas in which the groups have influence and demonstrate that there is no good arena for the enemy to respond. Where the enemy does initially receive the hostility, the administration will work to raise the morale in that area and communicate to all Muslims that assistance is not limited by borders.¹³²

The epitome of using terrorism as a deterrent was the bombing in Madrid, Spain on March 11, 2004, which was also three days before the Spanish general election. The

¹²⁹ Ibid.,

¹³⁰ Ibid., 33

¹³¹ Ibid.,

¹³² Ibid.,

well-orchestrated bombings in the commuter train killed 191 people.¹³³ The al-Qaeda member linked to the attack was Amer Azizi, who was a Moroccan who lived in Madrid for a decade, and left Spain in 2001 to join al-Qaeda. Notably, Azizi was a part of the Abu Dahdah cell which was established by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri in the mid-1990s. Azizi worked closely with al-Qaeda core senior leadership to orchestrate the attack.

Al-Suri also addresses the Madrid bombing in his book the *Global Islamic Resistance Call*. He explains how the bombing was a successful deterrent operation and there were three major outcomes. The first was that it changed public opinion in Spain. Polls showed that three days before the Parliamentary election the right-wing party, who allied with Bush and sent 2,000 troops to Iraq, was favored.¹³⁴ After the bombing, the Socialist Party, who promised to withdraw troops, won the election. The second was that Spain did in fact withdraw Spanish forces from Iraq. The third was that the entire European-American alliance was shaken and countries started debating withdrawal from the region.¹³⁵

Another example of al-Qaeda successfully using a terrorist attack to deter their enemy and have them leave their territory was in October 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia. Two U.S. helicopter special operations forces were shot down by Somalis who were

¹³³ Fernando Reinares "The Evidence of Al-Qa'ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack." *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. March 22, 2012. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evidence-of-al-qaidas-role-in-the-2004-madrid-attack>.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 416

¹³⁵ Ibid.,

Additionally, polls released by the Spaniards showed that the Populist party was leading with 42%, while the Socialist party had 38%. These polls were released 4 days before the March attacks.

http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/17/world/bombings-madrid-election-outcome-spain-grapples-with-notion-that-terrorism.html?_r=0

reportedly trained by al-Qaeda.¹³⁶ It resulted in the death of eighteen Americans and the attack led to the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia.

Analysis

This section looks at the findings from the case studies and compare how al-Qaeda's strategy to acquire CBRN and uses terrorism attacks aligns dissuasion by denial. After, the two case studies are compared and one can identify where al-Qaeda's strengths and weaknesses lie.

Use of CBRN

Al-Qaeda's desire to acquire CBRN weapons is directly related to its desire to attain power and influence and to attain and credible capability. The data has also shown however, that al-Qaeda tries to obtain CBRN for offensive purposes and not as a strategic deterrent. In order for DND to work, there must be a credible capability that will prevent the adversary from attacking, or there must be fear of reprisal. The acquisition of CBRN could be used as a credible capability. However, from the examples given in the data section, al-Qaeda does not use CBRN for DND purposes. Instead, the data shows that al-Qaeda cautiously uses CBRN for offensive purposes.

As mentioned previously, Usama bin Laden said in 1998 that al-Qaeda was acquiring CBRN technologies to act as a deterrent, although, the fatwa issued by al-Fadh in 2003 proves to contradict this statement. In the fatwa, the use of these weapons could be for offensive purposes, not just for deterrence purposes. The justification given for using weapons of mass destruction is due to the need for reciprocity of millions of

¹³⁶ http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4677978/ns/world_news-hunt_for_al_qaida/t/al-qaida-timeline-plots-attacks/#.WQSxylMxmB

Muslim deaths at the hands of the West as well as the belief that jihad supersedes all other considerations. If the use of these weapons would support jihad, then it is justifiable, no matter the collateral damage. Al-Fadh and his fatwa accept the reprisal of the attack, if the attack serves a higher interest. The two fatwas issued also change al-Qaeda's strategy of attaining WMDs for deterrence purposes to offensive purposes.

The data on al-Qaeda's pursuit of chemical and biological weapons (CW, BW) also supports that al-Qaeda uses the weapons for offensive attacks and not as a deterrent. All of the above examples of al-Qaeda's CBRN were for offensive purposes. Furthermore, when AQI tried to deploy a chemical attack on the Jordanian General Intelligence Department, it received considerable backlash from the populace. This was cause for concern for AQI, and ended with al-Zarqawi denouncing the attack due to bad press.¹³⁷ CBRN weapons are stigmatized by the international community, which does not tolerate them. If al-Qaeda were to use these weapons, they would receive backlash from the media, which could hurt its call to jihad. This is why al-Qaeda tends to favor using explosives and bombings instead of CBRN weapons. There is also a stigma associated with these weapons because of its inhumanness.

There is a technical and monetary aspect which is associated with CBRN weapons that is important to address. CBRN weapons are more expensive and take scientists and specialists to create the weapon. Explosives are less expensive and easier to manufacture; therefore, they are a better weapon to use than CBRN. This contributes to the fact that

¹³⁷ Beacham Publishing's TRAC (Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium); *Biological / Chemical / Agricultural Terrorism*; al Qaeda; <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/biological-chemical-agricultural-terrorism/al-qaeda>; accessed Monday, July 18th, 2016.

there have been no nuclear, radiological or biological attacks, and only a handful of chemical attacks by al-Qaeda. In fact, the most common chemical weapon used by al-Qaeda is chlorine, and this is because it is fairly abundant and commonly used for industrial purposes.¹³⁸ Additionally, in recent years the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention have strengthened, which has made it harder for VNSAs to attain chemical and biological weapons. Therefore, there is a risk associated with using CBRN, especially if the attacks could be linked backed to al-Qaeda, they could lose legitimacy. Using methods of violence that are vehemently opposed by most of the population could end up hurting the group.

Moreover, al-Qaeda would most likely never be able to acquire enough CBRN weapons to serve as a mutual deterrent against the West, especially with the technical aspects as well as monetary mentioned above. In the end game, al-Qaeda does not have nuclear weapons, and its CW and BW weapons are restricted. Therefore, the purpose of these attacks would be offensive or to express disapproval of an act by an adversary.

Use of Terrorist Attacks

Al-Qaeda has used terrorism as a dissuasion by denial deterrence strategy, but has only had limited success. The example of the Madrid bombing supports this assertion. The goal as mentioned by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Abu Bakr Naji is that the adversary's population will be so overcome with fear by the attack that they will not want to engage with al-Qaeda anymore for fear of future attacks. Al-Qaeda will continue to test its

¹³⁸ "Industrial Chemicals as Weapons: Chlorine." *National Threat Initiative*.
<http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/industrial-chemicals-weapons-chlorine/>.

adversary's boundaries to see the type of reaction it receives. However, as shown, the success of using terrorist attacks as a deterrent is very limited. Additionally, terrorist attacks have a very low success rate, making them an inefficient tool for deterrence.

Internalized deterrence also aligns al-Qaeda uses terrorist attacks as a deterrence strategy. Internalized deterrence, which is when an action is carried out that consequently deters the enemy, has the most applicability because a terrorist attack is administered for a variety of reasons, not just to deter the enemy. For example, a terrorist attack could be in protest to an action that the adversary took, but the fear associated from the attack happened to deter the adversary from repeating that same action. This is particularly applicable to lone wolves because their motive is to show allegiance to jihad and discontent towards the status quo.

Furthermore, after a terrorist attack the enemy may be less likely to further agitate the aggressor for fear of a repeated incident. Al-Qaeda was able to deter and influence Spain from keeping its troops in Iraq by bombing the subway system in Madrid three days before the election. The attack was carefully and administered immediately before the general election where the two competing parties were in close competition. Its success is mostly due to the timeliness of the attack and the state of the nation at the time.

Another prevalent deterrence trend found in jihad literature is the purpose of the attack is twofold. The first purpose is that the attacks are intended to cause fear, so that they can promote its ideology and show its disdain for the West. The second is to force the West to withdraw from its territory. Al-Qaeda knows the territory, and its customs while the US doesn't, so they have the advantage over the US. One example of this was

during the US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq a picture surfaced of American soldiers mutilating Iraqi bodies. This caused outrage in the international community and turned the populace against the Americans, which worked in favor of al-Qaeda and strengthened its ideology.¹³⁹

As Usama bin Laden argued, the goal of Jihad is to build a caliphate strong to stand up to the west and protect Muslims. Importantly, there were times, especially at the birth of al-Qaeda where they wanted encroachment on its territory, so that they could turn the population against the evil west and enlighten them to jihad. Now that al-Qaeda is in the spotlight, an attack that is too brutal can deter people from joining the group. Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote a letter to al-Zarqawi urging him against the use of brutal force on the population because it could in fact hurt the cause of jihad.¹⁴⁰

Strengths and Weaknesses of al-Qaeda's Deterrence Strategy

Al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy as a whole focuses on using strategic measures to change its adversary's actions. This is shown by its efforts to gain legitimacy and power by obtaining CBRN weapons, and using a deterrence strategy focused on influencing the citizens of the west through terrorist attacks. In order for its deterrence strategy to work, it has to strike a balance between instilling fear and showing its superiority, while not antagonizing the enemy to take action. If the population is moved against al-Qaeda and

¹³⁹“Marine Pleads Guilty to Urinating on Bodies of Dead Taliban” *NBC News*. January 16, 2013 <http://usnews.nbcnews.com/news/2013/01/16/16552152-marine-pleads-guilty-to-urinating-on-bodies-of-dead-taliban-posing-for-photographs?lite>

¹⁴⁰ Laura Mansfield. *His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri*. (Old Tappan, NJ: TLG Publications, 2006), 223

does not want to spend any more resources or lose lives to combat it, then al-Qaeda will be able to grow in its territory and eventually be a standing power against the west.

The main strength of al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy is that it is versatile. While al-Qaeda's attempts to obtain CBRN weapons are of great concern for the west, they promote their posture within its region. Groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) would greatly benefit from this capability since they control territory in Yemen and are of the same rationality as other actors in the region. Using terrorist attacks as a means of deterrence is also a strength because it serves as two means to support Jihad. The first is that it instills fear into al-Qaeda's enemies and the second is that it has the ability to alter democracies decisions. Additionally, suicide bombings also wear on democratic countries because people are overcome by the act of suicide and the casualties associated with it.

The weakness associated with al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy is that its pursuance of CBRN weapons would not deter a state adversary, especially because the two are not of the same rationality. Al-Qaeda has also proven itself to act irrationally, and a state would not trust al-Qaeda not to use the weapons. Furthermore, it is very difficult to attain CBRN technologies, which require sufficient funds and specialized knowledge. Al-Qaeda is also susceptible to the media and if it were to use CBRN it could receive backlash that could hurt its credibility, which happened during the failed attempted to attack the Jordanian General Intelligence Department.

Conclusion

The implication for understanding al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy is that it helps to give a baseline of where al-Qaeda draws the line in terms of attacks, as well as what al-

Qaeda is afraid of. Understanding this can help the US develop a more effective counterterrorism and deterrence strategy towards al-Qaeda. There are also implications for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) since it morphed from al-Qaeda's AQI, and uses some of the same ideological platforms for justification of violence.

Al-Qaeda has shown that they are willing and have the religious justification to use CBRN weapons for offensive purposes against the west. However, instead of heavily investing in developing CBRN technology and weapons, al-Qaeda has used explosives more since they are cheaper and more abundant. Al-Qaeda has also used terrorist attacks as a means to deter its enemy and change political outcomes, as this was seen in the case of Spain.

If al-Qaeda were to successfully use the CBRN as a deterrent, its adversary would most likely have to be an actor without same level of capabilities. This superiority could also be used as coercive diplomacy. Al-Qaeda could promote its ideology and territory by using the fear of reprisal if a group were to infringe on its territory. Its goal is to create an Islamic caliphate and instill Islamic sharia law. If al-Qaeda were to successfully acquire CBRN weapons, this would escalate its bargaining position in the international community.

One striking fear that plagues al-Qaeda's leadership is the media. While the media serves as a platform for promoting al-Qaeda's ideology, it can also hurt al-Qaeda's image because it broadcasts the atrocities associated with al-Qaeda's attacks. This can turn the people against al-Qaeda. When the plane flew into the twin towers on September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda was thrust into the spotlight and was therefore able to start to influence

the media. They wanted to strike fear into the west and ignite a movement within Muslims to join the Jihad. Now that they have the attention of the media, they have to balance its attacks or people will be deterred from joining al-Qaeda. For example, the use of biological and chemical weapons is stigmatized, outraging the public. Therefore, if al-Qaeda were to use such weapons, it would have to be in a dire situation or a situation in which the impact of the attack would outweigh the backlash. This could explain why al-Qaeda sometimes waits to claim attacks until the initial shock is over.

After analyzing how al-Qaeda conducts its deterrence strategy and addressing its fear of the media, it is important to also address the implications for the United States. The first is that it is very unlikely that al-Qaeda will be a CBRN threat. However, even if al-Qaeda were to acquire enough of the weapon, al-Qaeda and the US are of a different rationality and the US would not trust al-Qaeda not to use the weapons. Therefore, the acquisition of CBRN would not be a strong deterrent for the United States. Terrorist attacks, on the other hand, carry more weight. This is because of the mental toll that it takes on the American population. It is also very hard to predict and prevent terrorist attacks. However, it is shown that al-Qaeda can use terrorism as a dissuasion by denial strategy.

Chapter 3: Building the Caliphate: The Plausibility of an Islamic state

Introduction

The goal of many violent Salafi Jihadist groups is to establish an Islamic Caliphate within its area of operation. This caliphate would essentially be a state in which the organization executed governance over its people and established a strict form of Sharia Law. Groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have taken measures to create strategies to make its aspiration of an Islamic caliphate a reality. ISIS declared themselves a caliphate in 2014. ISIS's core has also had success in holding territory and establishing governance in two primary areas: Mosul, Iraq and Ar Raqqa, Syria. In terms of al-Qaeda, its affiliate in Yemen al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has had the most success in trying to establish territory and governance over its people. This chapter addresses whether it is plausible for a violent Salafi extremist group to achieve its goal of establishing a state in an era of globalization.

In this chapter looks at literature about what makes up a state and examine what is needed to successfully build an Islamic state. Most of the literature applies to what is needed to build a Western state. The reasoning behind this is because in the regions that these groups operate, they are not resource self-sufficient. They therefore would need to trade with work with other nations in order to get the commodities needed to prosper. Western nations would not want to trade with an illegitimate state. Additionally, the author researches literature about characteristics of a state especially as it pertains to political Islam in the globalization era. Importantly, my literature review serves as a platform for me to analyze how successful a Salafi group can be at building a Caliphate.

To determine if it is plausible for a Salafi Islamic group to build a caliphate, two case studies are used. The first case study is ISIS and the second is AQAP. The two groups were chosen because both have been successful in attaining territory and instilling a pseudo-government. Both have also had varying degrees of success in controlling territory and exerting its influence over the populace.

The analysis section looks at the group's strengths and weaknesses. After the analysis, it is determined whether the groups have succeeded in building a State based on the conditions set in the literature review. The chapter concludes with an overview of how plausible it is for a Salafi Jihad group to build a caliphate given the characteristics needed for state.

Literature Review

The modern sovereign state was created as a result of the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.¹⁴¹ As nationalist movements swept across the continent during the late 18th century and early 19th century, nation-states began to develop.¹⁴² A state's framework is comprised of sovereignty, a political unit, and territory.¹⁴³ The literature review looks at these three aspects of a state as it applies to political Islam in this literature review.

Sovereignty

One of the foremost leading scholars in political philosophy is Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes was a scholar during the 1600s and wrote his infamous *Leviathan* in 1651. Of

¹⁴¹ Gamal A. G. Soltan. "State Building, Modernization and Political Islam: The Search for Political Community(s) in the Middle East." *Revista CIDOB D'Afers Internacionals* no. 37 (Sep 1, 1997): 30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40585642>.

¹⁴² Ibid.,

¹⁴³ Theodore H. Cohn and 1940. *Global Political Economy*. Seventh edition ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016. 6

particular importance to this chapter, Hobbes described the ways in which a state can acquire sovereignty and maintain sovereignty over the people. Although first, a commonwealth must be formed where the people obey a common authority. This common authority is referred to by Hobbes as the Leviathan.¹⁴⁴ This sovereign, which may be an individual or group, is then granted power by the people and has the responsibility to do whatever is necessary to defend the commonwealth. Commonwealths may be formed in two ways according to Hobbes, through institution or agreement, and through acquisition or force.¹⁴⁵ Both ways are equal in establishing a commonwealth. A commonwealth by acquisition is of particular relevance to this chapter because both AQAP and ISIS have created a commonwealth by force. By using force, the people who are subject to the sovereign obey the sovereign for fear of death or other retribution factors.¹⁴⁶

Since the Hobbes era, globalization has occurred and many scholars argue that Hobbes's theory of sovereignty is not as applicable to the present day. In *Sovereignty and Territorial Borders in a Global Age*, the author argues that globalization has made sovereignty evolve.¹⁴⁷ Inviolable sovereignty has rarely, if ever, existed, and as a result of globalization there is an increased tie between polity and the state. Because of this there

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Hobbes, Holger Hanowell, and Jürgen Klein. *Leviathan*. Reclams Universal-Bibliothek. Nach der Ausgabe London 1651 ed. Vol. Nr. 18595. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013.196

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 107-108

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 122

¹⁴⁷ Christopher Rudolph. "Sovereignty and Territorial Borders in a Global Age." *International Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (2005): 2

is an argument present in the academic community that territory is becoming less important in an increasingly borderless world.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, due to globalization, there has been an increased emphasis on multilateralism and trans-border flows. This is usually equated with a decline in sovereign power; however, in the current era “sovereign states self-limit their sovereignty by accepting constraints on their actions in order to gain certain benefits from inclusion in international regimes or organizations.”¹⁴⁹ The importance of this is that while states do not have to engage in globalization, for many reasons including economic prosperity, it is in its best interest to engage in globalization.

Other authors argue that sovereignty can now be broken down into four distinct types: Westphalian, domestic, interdependence, and international legal.¹⁵⁰ Westphalian sovereignty limits the involvement of foreign actors within a state. Interdependence refers to the control of trans-border movement and international legal refers to the factors that involve mutual recognition of states within the nation-state system.¹⁵¹ Krasner notes that when it comes to the Westphalian and international legal types, sovereignty deals exclusively with authority; whereas interdependence sovereignty deals exclusively with control and domestic sovereignty encompasses both.¹⁵²

Political Unit

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 3

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.,

¹⁵¹ Ibid.,

¹⁵² Ibid.,

One characterization of a state suggests that there is an identification between the people and the governing body that rules them.¹⁵³ Included in this is the right to self-determination, which scholars argue as being derived from the ideal of a nation-state,¹⁵⁴ Self-determination is the representation that the people can determine their political status, as well as freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.¹⁵⁵ The idea of self-determination is particularly important to democratic societies. Although self-determination has led to conflict, it is particularly important to democratic societies. The conflict caused by self-determination is because of competing identities of the populace and disputes between different groups who identify differently.¹⁵⁶ This relates to the Middle East because of its diverse ethnicities who identify contrarily from one another.¹⁵⁷

The articles goes on to argue that conflict between the different identities is the essence of nation building, which he defines as “the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group’s culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups.”¹⁵⁸ Soltan notes that conflict and contention between

¹⁵³ Gamal A. G. Soltan. "State Building, Modernization and Political Islam: The Search for Political Community(s) in the Middle East." *Revista CIDOB D'Afers Internacionals* no. 37 (Sep 1, 1997): 30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40585642>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁵ "The United Nations and Decolonization." The United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>.

¹⁵⁶ Gamal A. G. Soltan. "State Building, Modernization and Political Islam: The Search for Political Community(s) in the Middle East." *Revista CIDOB D'Afers Internacionals* no. 37 (Sep 1, 1997): 31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40585642>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 32

the different identities hinder any possible national consensus in the regions country.

Therefore, the territorial state becomes the arena where traditional entities and identities interact.¹⁵⁹

In the Middle East, as states began to form, different identities began to identify with the state, and even those identities who did not identify with a state, were forced to acclimate and live within the state setting. However, territory in itself is not enough for a group to be recognized as a state. In fact, the importance of territory was initiated by the European colonial powers.¹⁶⁰ The legitimacy of the territory state in the Arab World is considerably measured by the state's commitment to serving interests that are in a larger scope than the interests of the territorial state.¹⁶¹ Soltan goes on to say, "The relationships among these types of identities are not static by any means. Large segments of Middle Eastern societies keep oscillating among different types of identities; the problem with such oscillation stems from the impact it has on the legitimacy, political, and regional stability of Arab states."¹⁶²

Tamara Cofman Wittes of the Brookings Institution and other colleagues argue that there are three models of dominance in the Middle East today.¹⁶³ The first is fragile democracy, as seen in Tunisia. The second order is the order through savagery, like ISIS and its brute force domination. The third model is renewed authoritarianism, as

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 32

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.,

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 33

¹⁶² Ibid.,

¹⁶³ Tamara Cofman Wittes. Middle East Strategy Task Force: Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations: Atlantic Council of the United States, November 21 2016: 3

experienced in Egypt under Sisi. The authors argue that the latter two of these models do not offer a stable or successful path for Middle Eastern states. Currently in the Middle East it seems that extremism and authoritarianism compete as alternative models for Arab governance.

Governance is particularly important for a successful state and the report lays out four essential criteria to make governance more stable in the Arab world, and represents a consensus view of the field. The first point is that governance must be inclusive. Excluding ethnic minorities or women from society marginalizes too much of the population.¹⁶⁴ Half of the population in the Middle East is under thirty years of age, and half of women in the area are marginalized.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, when governance is by majority of older male elites, the authors argue that it is a recipe for grievance and instability.

The second criteria for durable governance is that it must be transparent. Government opacity creates suspicion and exacerbates problems of authority.¹⁶⁶ A sustainable government needs to listen to public demand and be accountable. A durable government opens itself up to public scrutiny and input. This aligns with the third criteria, which is that in order to have durable governance it must be effective. Over the past few decades in the Middle East there has been a stagnation and decline of the state institution's effectiveness. It is seen as being top-heavy and mired with corruption and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 9

bureaucracy.¹⁶⁷ The final criteria is that governments need to be accountable because governments should be sensitive to public opinion.

To have good governance, there must be respect for the equality of all citizens. This is especially the case for exclusive governments and governments that use violence as a means to control the populace.¹⁶⁸ Promoting equality for all citizens and having an inclusive government can be used to counter the resurgence of violence in societies emerging from conflict. Inclusive politics has also been shown to be a central foundation for economic success. In terms of the Middle East, “popular grievances in the Arab world before 2011 resulted not just from material deprivation or conflicts over resource allocation, but from the exclusionary and partisan manner in which government decision-making occurred and still occurs in many places.”¹⁶⁹ Because of this, citizens’ expectations shifted fundamentally and governments were left to catch up to the new social reality. Chants by the Arab Spring protestors included the need for, “bread, freedom, and social justice.”¹⁷⁰

Territory

Also of significance in establishing a state is military might.¹⁷¹ An important application of military is that it is a basic variable in measuring state power, and can be used to take and secure territory.¹⁷² Of equal importance is the implication of military

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 29

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 30

¹⁷¹ Risa A Brooks. "Making Military might: Why do States Fail and Succeed? A Review Essay." *International Security* 28, no. 2 (2003): 149.

¹⁷² Ibid., 151

effectiveness in defense planning.¹⁷³ Military effectiveness focuses on the tactical and operation level activities and their success. A state can have robust military capabilities and still be ineffective because the weapons that they possess are ill-suited for the kinds of war they are likely to fight.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, it is imperative that the state strike a balance between having enough resources to protect their boundaries and fight against adversaries, while also not overstretching their resources. In fact, some scholars argue that military effectiveness is directly correlated to four dimensions: political, strategic, operational, and tactical ability.¹⁷⁵ An effective military integrates these four dimensions, with an awareness of each of the present constraints.

The German sociologist Max Weber wrote that, “a state cannot be defined in terms of its ends, but rather in terms of the specific means peculiar to it. The state is a human community that (successfully) claims monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”¹⁷⁶ Once the government has control over its instruments of violence, it further uses them to provide law and order, build up the state, oppress its own people, and engage in policies of aggrandizement.¹⁷⁷ Ahmed Hashim wrote an article that discussed military power and state formation in postmodern Iraq. He argues that Iraqi rulers have misused violence against their own people as well as others. This misused violence led to weakened state security and intervention by other states.

¹⁷³ Ibid.,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 154

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 155

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed S Hashim. "Military Power and State Formation in Modern Iraq." *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 4 (Dec, 2003): 29. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1061-1924.2003.00128.x/abstract>.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.,

In Hashim's article he uses the security-sector reform (SSR) as his conceptual framework to analyze the relationship between military power and security and state formation.¹⁷⁸ Notably, Hashim observes that over the past decade, security sectors around the globe have undergone vast transformations and resulted in the promotion of economic development and progress by lessening the burden of the military sector and implementing good governance and democratization through the demilitarization of society.¹⁷⁹

Hashim also examines that while the military power and security has declined over the past decade, there are still war fighting capabilities that are needed to wage a war effectively.¹⁸⁰ One of these is having stable civil-military relations.¹⁸¹ An example provided in the article is that if civil-military relations are unstable, the military could intervene in the political process and will instead focus on politics and not military strength.¹⁸²

The literature on the characteristics of a state is split into three separate features – sovereignty, political unit, and territory. These characteristics go back to the Peace of Westphalia that was created by western states in 1648 and set the foundation of statehood. Non-state actors such as ISIS and AQAP are trying to create a state. Due to globalization and the increased interdependence of nations, the meaning of statehood is changing. For example, some scholars argue that territory is becoming less important,

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 30

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 32

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 33

¹⁸² Ibid.,

while others argue that military might and territorial boundaries are critical in attaining and sustaining/building/etc a state. Since ISIS has expanded its territory and taken major cities in Iraq and Syria it has received a lot of attention about whether it has formed a state. Not as much has been written on AQAP and its status on attaining an Islamic State. This chapter will expand on whether ISIS and AQAP have created an Islamic State and if they have not, whether it is plausible for them to do so.

Theory

This chapter evaluates the research question of whether it is plausible for a Salafi Islamist group to succeed in building an Islamic State by comparing the characteristics of a state to ISIS and AQAP. As mentioned previously, the goal of Salafi Jihadist groups is to build an Islamic Caliphate that enforces sharia law. A Caliphate can be described as “a state that is established under the sovereignty of Allah, and will do Allah’s will by working within the limits prescribed by Him in accordance with His instructions and injunctions.”¹⁸³ The Caliphate is also described by an Islamic fundamentalist as, “the political system of Islam is based on three principles: Tawhid (unity of God/Allah), Risalat (Prophethood) and Khilafat (Viceregency).¹⁸⁴ These three principles define the Caliphate and very much resemble a state. Therefore, using the characterizations of a state as my theory will allow me to evaluate my two case studies – ISIS and AQAP – and determine whether the groups can form a state. The literature review on characterization of a state provides a framework for what is needed to build a successful state.

¹⁸³ Vernie Liebl. "The Caliphate." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2009): 374.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 373

Methods

For my methods section, two case studies were chosen to determine whether it was plausible for a Salafist Jihad group to establish a Caliphate as a traditional state. The first case chosen was ISIS. ISIS is a unique terrorist organization because soon after its formal founding, they declared themselves a caliphate in 2014. Al-Qaeda core leadership, especially during the Usama bin Laden (UBL) era, was very careful to not declare a Caliphate until it was powerful enough and legitimate. ISIS announced its existence and immediately started taking over territory and declared its Caliphate. Because of this, and the fact that they hold territory, and instill governance over the population within its territory they are used as a case study.

The second case study chosen to research was al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). This affiliate group of al-Qaeda has been one of the strongest affiliates and has also been able to hold territory and establish governance in Southern and Central Yemen. Because of the current civil war in Yemen, AQAP has been able to reap the benefits of more secured territories and safe havens. Recently AQAP has been able to stay below the radar due to Syria's ongoing civil war as well as ISIS' presence in both Syria and Iraq. An article in the Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel in 2015 stated that AQAP was the greatest direct threat to the United States and is still growing stronger.¹⁸⁵

By looking at the Data on ISIS and AQAP and comparing it to the literature found on the main characteristics of a state, the author is able to discern whether ISIS and AQAP have succeeded in building a state, and if they have not whether it is possible for

¹⁸⁵ Katherine Zimmerman. "AQAP A Resurgent Threat." *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 9 (Sep 1, 2015): 19.

them too. Both groups will have to have sovereignty, an established political unit, and recognized territory and borders.

Data

ISIS

Background

ISIS had its origins from a militant group birthed from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2000 called Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ).¹⁸⁶ When Zarqawi failed to get enough support for his group he travelled to Afghanistan to fight with the Soviet resistance. In Afghanistan, he was charged with running an Islamic militant training camp near Herat.¹⁸⁷ It was not until the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that Zarqawi moved into Iraq where he developed extensive ties with Ansar al-Islam, a Kurdish Islamic group. In 2003, during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi saw the opportunity to launch the Sunni minority insurgency after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The insurgency comprised of five different groups, including JTJ. In late 2004, Zarqawi brought his group under the loose control of UBL, and was rebranded as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).¹⁸⁸

AQI's ideology was solidified in 2005 in the groups "creed and methodology," where the group expressed its determination to promote and defend *tawhid* (monotheism), which is defined by the group as anyone who did not believe in the oneness of God was an infidel and subject to *takfir* (excommunication and death). The overarching goals of the group were to, "remove the aggressor from Iraq; affirm *tawhid*,

¹⁸⁶ Ahmed S Hashim. "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate." *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (2014): 69. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mepo.12096/abstract>.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 70

propagate the message that there is no god but God to all the countries in which Islam is absent; wage jihad to liberate Muslim territories from infidels and apostates; establish a wise caliphate, in which the sharia rules supreme, as it did during the Prophet Mohammad.”¹⁸⁹ This ideology and goals directly aligned with al-Qaeda core goals and ideology.

In 2005 a letter was intercepted from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Zarqawi which stated that he was displeased and urged caution about the use of brutality and aggression by AQI. Zawahiri expressed that jihadists cannot win without the hearts and minds of the Sunni masses.¹⁹⁰ In 2006 AQI created the Mujahideen Shura Council in an attempt to unify different Sunni insurgencies in Iraq. Later that year on June 7, 2006, Zarqawi was killed by the U.S. military. The leadership fell under Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who announced the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). This declaration was a failure as the group did not have enough resources and by 2008 the group was apparently defeated.

In 2009 as U.S. force began pulling out of cities in Iraq, ISI began attempts to sabotage Iraqi government infrastructure and attacks on civilians. On April 10, 2010, Abu Ayu al-Masri and Aby Umar Abudllah al-Rashid al-Baghdadi were both killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid. 80% of the group’s 42 leaders had been killed or captured, with only 8 remaining at large.¹⁹¹ From 2010-2013, ISI began or reemerged due to numerous events: the death of UBL and the fading leadership of new al-Qaeda emir Zawahiri, the outbreak

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 71

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 72

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 73

of the Syrian civil war, and the growing tensions between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI and transformed the organization into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Sovereignty

Reports have shown that laws under ISIS territory can be strict and oppressive.¹⁹² ISIS is devoted to restoring the purest form of Islam as was practiced under the Prophet Mohammed during the 7th century. When ISIS started to take territory in 2013-2014 much of the Sunni population welcomed them because of improved infrastructure and living conditions that ISIS offered.¹⁹³ This is especially true in Mosul where many Sunnis felt marginalized by the Shias.¹⁹⁴ One civilian said, "ISIS with all its brutality is more honest and merciful than the Shia government in Baghdad and its militias."¹⁹⁵ When ISIS took Mosul, the city's population was estimated at 1.7 million, as many as 500,000 people fled, but the others remained because of family ties or because they wanted to take their chance with ISIS.¹⁹⁶ In the case of Syria, civilians faced a repressive dictatorship. Therefore, the alternate regimes in both Syria and Iraq were not much better than ISIS, and in some areas, they were worse. However, as living conditions have started to deteriorate in ISIS held territory, citizens are becoming wary of the group and its harsh

¹⁹² "Life Under the ISIS Caliphate." The Week, August 22, 2015. <http://theweek.com/articles/572910/life-under-isis-caliphate>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁴ Mara Revkin and William McCants. "Experts Weigh in: Is ISIS Good at Governing?" Brookings Institute, November 20, 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/11/20/experts-weigh-in-is-isis-good-at-governing/>.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.,

forms of punishment.¹⁹⁷ In some regions, the price of gasoline has gone up to as much as \$18 a gallon, and the people are having to ration water and burning wood.¹⁹⁸ Regardless of these facts, many citizens admit that ISIS's heavy-handed rule is more effective than that of the Iraqi government.

Meanwhile, in ISIS' larger held cities like Ar Raqqa and Mosul, ISIS exerts especially strict control. ISIS has a special police force called the Hisbah, which patrols the streets and checks to ensure that shops are closed during prayers, men are bearded, and women are properly dressed.¹⁹⁹ Hisbah also inspect mobile phones and ensure that taxi drivers are listening to ISIS radio stations. Additionally, a pamphlet with the following laws under which ISIS governs was disseminated in Aleppo: "Drinking alcohol: 80 lashes. Slander: 80 lashes. Spying in the service of infidels: death. Renunciation of Islam: death. Robbery: if robbery and murder are committed, death by crucifixion."²⁰⁰

Political Unit

¹⁹⁷ "Life Under the ISIS Caliphate." The Week, August 22, 2015. <http://theweek.com/articles/572910/life-under-isis-caliphate>.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰⁰ Ibid.,

ISIS had been conducting governance activities in parts of Syria and Iraq at least seven months before Abu Bakr Baghdadi declared the Caliphate in June 2014.²⁰¹ Around Ar Raqqa, Syria and northeast of the city ISIS had already established religious centers, judicial power, humanitarian assistance, education, and infrastructure projects.²⁰² In July 2016, ISIS released a video that broke down the structure of the caliphate.²⁰³



Figure 1: ISIS Structure of the Caliphate

As one can see, the Khalifah, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, remains the leader of the caliphate. Other senior groups involve the Shura Council, which is the leadership body, and the Delegated Committee, which supports Baghdadi and the provinces around the world as well as the Office and Committees, the Wilayat (provinces), led by the Wali's (governors), and the Dawawin (offices to protect people's rights).²⁰⁴ The Dawawin is

²⁰¹ Charles Caris and Samuel Reynolds. "The Middle East Security Report ISIS Governance in Syria." Institute for the Study of War, July 2014: 9

http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf.

²⁰² Ibid.,

²⁰³ Jack Moore. "Isis Releases New Video Outlining 'structure of the Caliphate'" Newsweek, July 7, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-releases-new-video-outlining-structure-caliphate-478502>.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.,

responsible for enforcing brutal punishments for violators of Sharia law. Under the Wilayat, the graphic outlines the 35 provinces across the world, including 19 in Iraq and Syria and 16 outside the territory the group holds.

As ISIS began to take more territory and strengthen its self-proclaimed caliphate, a pattern emerged that showed ISIS' strategy to expand and take over new territory, while also consolidating its control. ISIS began to systematize, bureaucratize and formalize its governance structures, ensuring the same governance could be operated in each other the different *wilayats*.

A blog by the Brookings Institute showed that ISIS conducts state-building in two stages: pre-or partial territorial control and full territorial control.²⁰⁵ Within these two stages, there are five

	PHASE I: PRE- OR PARTIAL TERRITORIAL CONTROL	PHASE II: FULL TERRITORIAL CONTROL
INTELLIGENCE	Establish clandestine cells, infiltrate other groups, and create front groups	Find enemies and engage in entrapment activities, ensure former officials and other insurgents repent and give up their weapons, suppress potential awakening-type uprisings, control information (internet, Wi-Fi, satellites)
MILITARY	Set up training camps, wage asymmetric warfare (hit and run attacks, sniper assassination operations, drive-by shootings, improvised explosive devices [IEDs], car bombs, and suicide attacks)	Fight more like a state, adopt open warfare posture, use larger and heavier weaponry (tanks and armored personnel carriers [APCs]), organize larger-scale mobilizations and stormings, create buffer zones, and place more fighters on the front lines
DAWA	Reach out to the local population; organize da'wa forums focusing on youth and children; pass out da'wa literature in the streets, markets, and checkpoints; host public viewing parties of official ISIS media; hold meetings and lavish meals with notable local clans and individuals	Create media points, erect billboards to further ISIS's narrative and message
HISBA	Burn alcohol, cigarettes, hookahs, drugs, and what it deems items associated with sorcery; destroy Sufi, Shi'ite, and pagan shrines, tombs, and historical artifacts; make sure residents are praying on time, attending prayers, and closing their shops; monitoring food and medicine to make sure neither are expired or spoiled	Institute ta'zir (discretionary), qisas (retaliation), and hudud (fixed in the Quran and hadith) punishments, i.e. whippings, tying people to lamp posts or fences along with signs naming their misdeeds to deter future transgressions; cage individuals, cut off hands or feet, perform stoning, point-blank shootings, beheadings, and crucifixions
GOVERNANCE	Introduce taxes, as well as arbitration and reconciliation between different parties; provide basic social services (food and medicine)	Raise its black flag on poles, buildings, lamp posts; create custom road signs welcoming people to its cities and towns (sometimes even changing their names), as well as new custom gates; initiate public works projects (paving new roads and converting gravel roads to blacktop; fixing and putting up electric and phone lines; fixing, painting, and cleaning roads and medians; landscaping with trees, bushes, and plants; and building new mosques, markets, and shops); restart

Figure 2: State-building stages

additional phases of establishing control: intelligence, military, da'wa, hisba (consumer protection and moral policing) and governance, which are illustrated in *Figure 2*.

When ISIS first goes into a town, they offer humanitarian aid and improve key infrastructure such as water and electricity lines.²⁰⁶ ISIS coordinates with religious personnel to distribute aid. If they are in the town for a substantial period they repair

²⁰⁵ Ibid.,

²⁰⁶ Ibid.,

roads and provide additional services. Delivering key items such as food and water requires very little personnel and effort from ISIS, but has a large payoff as the people then see ISIS as less threatening. ISIS does not have infinite resources, though, and therefore they prioritize cities that are strategically important, giving more benefits, whereas small towns of little to no strategic importance receive little help.²⁰⁷

After aid is distributed, ISIS conduct religious outreach by calling the people to Islam (or in this case ISIS's brand of Islam). Its administrative department for religious outreach – Da'wa – holds special events that educate the people on ISIS' core beliefs and hold small study sessions at mosques.²⁰⁸

Territory

In order to administer territory under its control, ISIS uses a *Wilayat* system, which means state or mandate in Arabic.²⁰⁹ Depending on the control that ISIS has over the territory, *wilayat* can be defined as hard territory or simply as terrain. Since ISIS is a non-state actor, its territory is often fluid. In stronghold cities like Raqqa and Mosul, its territory is defined by the city limits.²¹⁰ A sanctuary map produced by the Institute for the Study of War on December 8, 2016 shows that ISIS still has control over parts of Syria

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 14

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 15

²⁰⁹ Charles Caris and Samuel Reynolds. "The Middle East Security Report ISIS Governance in Syria." Institute for the Study of War, July 2014: 14
http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS_Governance.pdf.14

²¹⁰ Alexandra Gutowski. "ISIS Sanctuary Map: December 8, 2016." Institute for the Study of War, December 8, 2016. <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/isis-sanctuary-map-december-8-2016>.

and Iraq, but also has support in larger areas surrounding its controlled territory.²¹¹

Recently anti-ISIS forces have fully encircled Mosul and penetrated the eastern side of the city, greatly reducing the ISIS stronghold. ISIS has also lost most of its physical control over Aleppo, and Dabiq while anti-ISIS forces have also started to try to retake Raqqa to reduce ISIS's territory and influence in Syria.

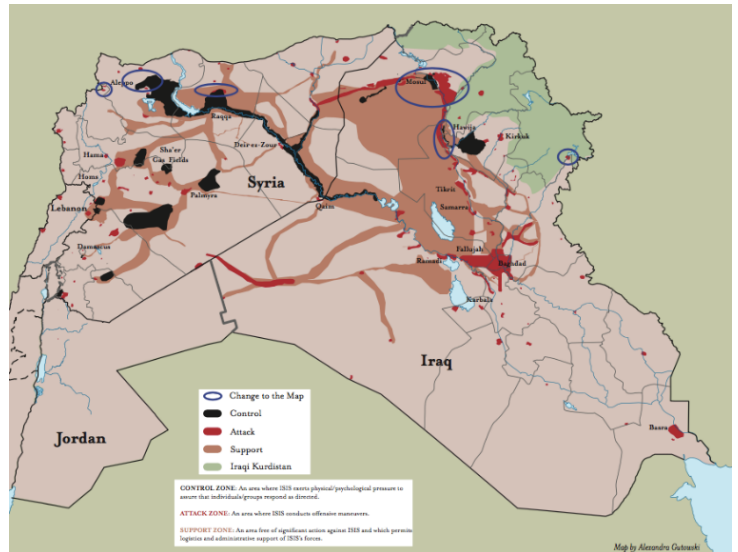


Figure 3: ISIS Territory

Of noteworthy importance is that ISIS' influence expands beyond its definable territory to its virtual caliphate. ISIS' sophistication and ability to control the internet and recruit members through social media is unlike that of any previous terrorist group. Even as ISIS loses territory; they are still able to influence and plan attacks globally and gain recruits.²¹² ISIS' virtual caliphate is much harder to target since it is unconventional warfare. ISIS uses this social media medium to expand its narrative and include different options for participation. Whether being a passive supporter, or an active member, ISIS provides guidance through a variety of different means to promote its message. The use of Twitter and its publications *Dabiq* and now *Rumiyah* are a couple of ways that ISIS

²¹¹ Ibid.,

²¹² Joseph L. Votel, Christina Bembeneck, Charles Hans, Jeffery Moutan and Amanda Spencer. "#Virtual Caliphate: Defeating ISIL on the Physical Battlefield is Not Enough." Center for a New American Security, January 12, 2017. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/virtual-caliphate>.

spreads its message.²¹³ In fact, *Rumiyah* now has a section called “Just Terrorism Tactics” that aids lone-wolf actors in choosing a weapon for its attack.

AQAP

Background

AQAP has been rated the most lethal of the al-Qaeda affiliates and was formed in January 2009 through the amalgamation between Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda.²¹⁴ Yemen has a legacy of jihad and in the late 1980s, the Saleh regime fostered Jihad in northern Yemen by repatriating thousands of Yemeni nationals who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan. These nationals were dispatched to fight the Soviet-backed Marxist governments of South Yemen and to successfully unify the country.²¹⁵

The jihad taking place in Yemen attracted the attention of other returning fighters from the Afghan war. Foremost among these fighters was Usama bin Laden. Bin LadenCii continued to advocate that Yemen play a central role in global jihad and a corps of jihadists who trained under him. AQAP predecessor groups include Jihad in Yemen (1990-1994), Army of Aden Abyan (1994-1998) and al-Qaeda in Yemen or AQY (1998-2003).²¹⁶ One of AQYs most successful attacks was the attack on the hull of the USS Cole, which killed seventeen U.S. servicemen. AQAPs ideology is consistent with al-Qaeda core’s goal to purge Muslim countries from western influence and replace the current regimes in the Middle East with an Islamic state that observes the strictest form of

²¹³ Ibid.,

²¹⁴ "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)." Council on Foreign, Relations, June 19, 2015
<http://www.cfr.org/yemen/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap/p9369>.

²¹⁵ Ibid.,

²¹⁶ Ibid.,

sharia law.²¹⁷ They also have produced propaganda to encourage Muslims to join jihad. Its magazine *Inspire* has been very effective in promoting its message.²¹⁸

Sovereignty

The civil war in Yemen has created an opportunity for AQAP to step in and create alliances with different tribal leaders to spread its governance and ideology. The deterioration of the Yemeni military has allowed AQAP to develop safe havens throughout the country and to gather resources found in those areas.²¹⁹ Adding to AQAP's legitimacy in the region is that many believe that the only justifiable alternative to the old government regime and the Huthis is AQAP. Many people are against the old government regime, but also view the Shia Huthis as an invading force.²²⁰ AQAP has furthered this rhetoric by declaring the Huthis an enemy and claimed that they are taking orders from Iran.

AQAPs primary areas of operation are in al-Bayda, Shabwah, al-Mukalla, and Abyan. To further its legitimacy in these areas, AQAP has allied themselves with tribal leaders.²²¹ Furthermore, AQAP has taken advantage of rivalries between different tribes and has been able to exploit these rivalries to gain more followers and safe havens. An example of this is its acquisition of territory in al-Bayda. After AQAP lost territory in parts of Shabwah and Abyan as well as al-Makalla, they fled to the mountainous region of al-Bayda. There they were able to exploit inter-tribal rivalries by leveraging access to

²¹⁷ Ibid.,

²¹⁸ Ibid.,

²¹⁹ Katherine Zimmerman. "AQAP A Resurgent Threat." *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 9 (Sep 1, 2015): 21

²²⁰ Ibid., 19

²²¹ Ibid., 21

firearms, funds, and military members.²²² In fact, a new approach that AQAP is taking to engage tribal members is by giving money in return for a safe haven.

When AQAP first gained territory in 2011 and 2012, the group created a new name to market its governance efforts called Ansar al Sharia. AQAP hoped that by rebranding itself, it would encourage people to join AQAP's jihad.²²³ Ansar al Sharia was featured in the news as well as on Twitter for handing out food to the poor in Mukallah, as well as improving electricity in AQAP-governed provinces.²²⁴

Also of importance is AQAP approach to implementing sharia law. Instead of immediately implementing the harshest form of Sharia law and using brutality to enforce it, AQAP leaders have consistently argued that sharia law needs to be implemented gradually. Muslims are not accustomed to jihad and therefore need to be taught. AQAP differs from ISIS in that they do not publicize punishments in any of its propaganda and instead will state what the punishment is and then have a picture of it from afar.²²⁵

Political Unit

AQAP is a hierarchical and compartmentalized organization.²²⁶ It has four separate branches, each with an overall emir heading the branch. The political branch is led by Qasim al-Rimi, who filled the position after former AQAP leader Nasir Wuhayshi

²²² Michael Horton. "Fighting the Long War: The Evolution of Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula." *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 1 (Jan, 2017): 19.

²²³ Thomas Joscelyn. "AQAP Provides Social Services, Implements Sharia while Advancing in Southern Yemen." *FDD Long War Journal*, February 3, 2016
<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/aqap-provides-social-services-implements-sharia-while-advancing-in-southern-yemen.php>.

²²⁴ Ibid.,

²²⁵ Ibid.,

²²⁶ "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." *Counter Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap>.

was killed in a U.S. drone strike.²²⁷ The political branch provides overall direction for the group, and is dual-hatted as the overall emir of AQAP. When Wuhayshi led the group, he was also responsible for approving targets, recruiting new members, and allocating resources to train and attack. It is unknown whether Rimi has picked up these responsibilities. The second branch in AQAP's organizational structure is the military branch, which is responsible for all of AQAP's attacks as well as building weaponry. The third branch is the propaganda branch, which is used to recruit new members as well as disseminate AQAP's magazine *Inspire*. The propaganda branch relies heavily on the posting of videos and preachings to inspire radicalization. One of the most successful propagandists was U.S.-born Anwar al-Awlaki who posted videos of himself in English to encourage radicalization. Awlaki directed the "Christmas Day Bomber" in 2009, and was linked with the Fort Hood shooter in 2009 as well as the "Times Square Bomber in 2010."²²⁸ The final branch is AQAP's religious branch, which is responsible for issuing fatwas (religious rulings) and promoting and instilling sharia law. The religious branch also works with the propaganda branch to justify violence and encourage jihad.²²⁹

One element within AQAP's organization structure is its intelligence and counterintelligence unit.²³⁰ AQAP recognizes and emphasizes the importance of human intelligence and puts resources into assassinating members of Yemen's intelligence

²²⁷ Ibid.,

²²⁸ Ibid.,

²²⁹ Ibid.,

²³⁰ Michael Horton. "Fighting the Long War: The Evolution of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula." *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 1 (Jan, 2017): 20.

service that pose threats to the group.²³¹ They also prioritize the formation of more intelligence cells that will prepare AQAP for the long war. The cells are used for infiltration of tribal militias and other pro-government forces that are fighting the Houthis.

Territory

As previously mentioned, AQAP has a presence in the Shabwa, al-Bayda, and Abyan districts. One of AQAP's most successful acquisition of territory was al-Mukalla in 2015. The city comprises of 500,000 people and is a major port in Yemen.

When AQAP controlled the city they abolished taxes for the local residents,

stockpiled hospitals, and imposed fees on ship traffic as one way to make up for the loss of tax revenue.²³² It is expected that AQAP was able to extort \$1.4 million from the national oil company in Mukalla and earned up to \$2 million a day on its taxes on goods and fuel coming into the port.²³³ AQAP's eventual loss of Mukalla hurt the group both

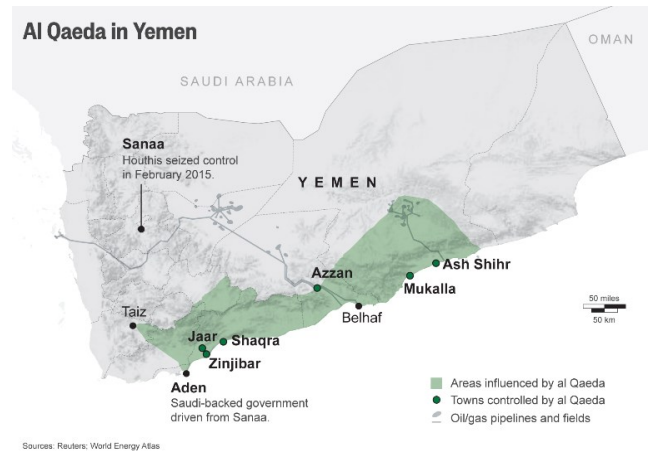


Figure 4: AQAP Territory

²³¹ Ibid.,

²³² Yara Bayoumy, Noah Browning and Mohammed Ghobari. "How Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen has made Al Qaeda Stronger – and Richer." Reuters, February 8, 2016
<http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/yemen-aqap/>.

²³³ Ibid.,

financially and politically, and yet AQAP was able to build a network in Mukalla, which acts as its eyes and ears of the relinquished city.²³⁴

Also of significance is when AQAP learned of the anti-AQAP forces plans to take back the city. AQAP responded by withdrawing from Mukalla and moving into Shabwah and al-Bayda.²³⁵ The map pictured below shows AQAP's territory holdings in Yemen.

The decision by AQAP to give up territory rather than suffer heavy losses signifies AQAP's territorial strategy.²³⁶ Instead of holding territory, the emphasis seems to be on engaging tribal leaders and offering money, resources, and/or protection for safe havens. While occupying cities is lucrative, as demonstrated by its occupation of Mukalla, it is more important to keep the strength of the group. As a result, AQAP's territory is fluid.

Analysis

The table below gives a summary of the data from the previous section, and is divided into two sections. The first explains the characteristics that both attained at the initial occupation of territory. The second is what characteristics the group had when they

X = Complete / = Partial	Initial Occupation			Final Occupation		
	Sovereignty	Political Unit	Territory	Sovereignty	Political Unit	Territory
ISIS	/	X	X	X	/	/
AQAP	/	X	X	X	X	/

Table 1: ISIS and AQAP State Characteristics

²³⁴ Ibid.,

²³⁵ Ibid.,

²³⁶ Michael Horton. "Fighting the Long War: The Evolution of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula." *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 1 (Jan, 2017): 20.

were at the end of their occupation. What is evident that both ISIS and AQAP have attained all aspects of a state, but not to the full extent needed to have a legitimate state.

ISIS

When examining ISIS' efforts to build a state, the possibility remains that they could establish an Islamic State. However, it is evident after looking at ISIS's sovereign control, political units, and acquisition of territory, it is very unlikely that they would be able to execute a true Islamic State. When ISIS first started acquiring territory, they began conducting humanitarian operations like helping to improve essential infrastructure and eradicating criminals and drug lords from its area. While the citizens in these towns may not have adhered to Salafi Islam, they believed that ISIS would protect them just as well, if not better than, the current government regimes. As ISIS continued to control territory, its brutality became more evident and frequent. They also increased taxes on citizens, causing discontent. While they are able to instill sovereignty and governance over its territory and are recognized as being legitimate rulers, there is an increased amount of disconnect between ISIS and its citizens that could lead to instability.

ISIS's political units and governance are sophisticated. Through systemization, bureaucratization and formalization of its governance structures, each *wilayat* receives the same guidance to execute its mission. However, as noted in the literature review self-determination and inclusiveness are factors for having a strong political unit. ISIS does not do have these characteristics. AQAP has bodies and institutions to enforce sharia law within each held territory. Literature on how to conduct good governance shows a discrepancy between how ISIS governs its territory and what is needed for a successful

state to govern its territory. The Brookings Institute and Atlantic Council report laid out four main criteria they considered essential to make governance more stable in the Arab world: inclusivity, transparency, effectiveness, and accountability.²³⁷ Furthermore, a state's success depends on self-determination.²³⁸ While it is shown that ISIS invades territory and some of the people accept ISIS as legitimate rulers, there have been cases where people decided that they wanted to leave the territory, and ISIS prevented them from leaving. This is because ISIS would lose money from taxation if the person(s) were to leave. ISIS also excludes and marginalizes everyone who does not adhere to its strict form of Salafism, without taking into account public opinion. Therefore, coercion also plays a large part of ISIS' governance and control over their people. As mentioned in the literature reviews, coercion is not a sustainable form of governance.

ISIS's acquisition of territory has been an impressive feat. Its ability to take key cities in Iraq and Syria has demonstrated its military capacity and its ideological influence in the region. It is important to note that they have been unable to maintain control of their territory, Mosul being the epitome of this. They took the city in 2015 and declared it to be its headquarters. Due to its brutality and threat to the rest of the region state, actors began an anti-ISIS coalition to retake the city. Key actors include Iraqi government forces, Iranian, and Kurdish forces. The literature on territory stressed the

²³⁷Tamara Cofman Wittes. Middle East Strategy Task Force: Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations: Atlantic Council of the United States, November 21 2016: 8-9

²³⁸Gamal A. Soltan "State Building, Modernization and Political Islam: The Search for Political Community(s) in the Middle East." *Revista CIDOB D'Afers Internacionals* no. 37 (Sep 1, 1997): 31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40585642>

importance of military might and the ability to defend territory. ISIS has only been able to protect its cities for one to two years and eventually succumb to opposition forces.

What is unique to ISIS is its virtual caliphate. ISIS maintains a strong ability to radicalize individuals all over the world through its propaganda efforts. Fighters no longer need to go to Syria or Iraq to train. Instead, they can learn how to build a bomb from an online manual posted by ISIS. This virtual caliphate is difficult for the West to target and provides ISIS with opportunities to strengthen its core message. As ISIS loses more territory in Iraq and Syria, the virtual caliphate may increase in importance, even serving as ISIS's main platform.

Even with ISIS' strong suits, they are unlikely to successfully build its caliphate. Its inability to work with the West and other actors in the region, coupled with its brutality towards its proclaimed adversaries would make it difficult to sustain a state. The international community has also targeted ISIS and declared the goal of the group's eradication. Unless ISIS changes its core ideology and specific treatment of citizens, ISIS will continue to be targeted by the West.

AQAP

The data on AQAP has shown that the group has maintained sovereignty over its people, has a political unit, and holds territory. However, it is very unlikely that AQAP would be able to form an Islamic State. While the unstable conditions in Yemen present and opportunity for AQAP, the group still does not have the capabilities to build a full-fledged state.

AQAP has shown that they have been able to exploit the civil war in Yemen to create alliances with different tribal leaders. Many Sunnis are against the government regime and dislike the Huthis because they are Shia. This presented an opportunity for AQAP to step in and protect the Sunnis. AQAP also differs from ISIS in many cases because when AQAP enters into a new territory, they do not immediately implement the harshest form of Sharia law. Instead, they gradually implement and educate the population on sharia. Like ISIS, they do impose harsh punishments for breaking the law, but they do not promote the same level of brutality. Furthermore, when AQAP went into Mukalla, they abolished taxes and instead taxed commodities in the port. They were also able to improve infrastructure and restock hospitals. This pleased the citizens of Mukalla and strengthened AQAP's legitimacy as a governing body.

AQAPs political units are hierarchical and more compartmentalized than ISIS. As mentioned earlier, AQAP has four separate branches, with an emir who has overall power. Its political unit as a whole is smaller than that of ISIS, but they have had significant success in conducting attacks and maintaining holds over territory. They also have a robust propaganda campaign that furthers AQAP's mission and recruits members. Moreover, AQAP efforts in intelligence and counterintelligence shows the group's commitment to maintain its integrity and target specific leaders who threatened the group.

It is evident from the literature found on the importance of political units for a state that as a state begins to form, the different identities and ethnicities in the state's area of influence begin to identify with the state, and even those who do not identify with

the state are forced to acclimate. Citizens do not necessarily identify with AQAP's ideology, but they still recognize its leadership because of the benefits that they received under its rule. The difficulty with this is that if AQAP does not continue to deliver the same services and goods, the population will become increasingly resentful of its presence and they would lose legitimacy as the ruling authority.

The ability to control territory is also an important factor for having a state. What is evident is that currently AQAP is more concerned with keeping the integrity and structure of the group strong, then holding territory. However, AQAP has done an astonishing job of imbedding themselves in the region through alliances with tribal leaders. Yemen is a different security environment because its tribal leaders have more influence than other parts of the Middle East. AQAP's ability to imbed themselves in the local population is one of the reasons why the group has continued to evolve. What inhibits AQAP from having the necessary territory to build a state is that they do not have a strong enough military force to deter its adversaries. They also purposely de-emphasize the importance of this ability. Instead, they continue to focus on building relationships with different tribal networks and will evacuate the territory when anti-AQAP coalition forces enter the area.

Because of these factors, AQAP is unlikely to be able to form a true state. They do not have a strong enough military force to protect its interests and also rely on providing goods and services to the local population to promote its ideology. Moreover, while AQAP is not as overtly brutal as ISIS, they still carry out attacks against western

targets, Houthis and government forces. Yemen is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, which means they would need to rely on imports for many of its goods.²³⁹

Conclusion

It is evident that both ISIS and AQAP have been able to attain certain characterizations of a state and have been successful in holding influence in its respective areas of operation. However, it is very unlikely that ISIS and AQAP would be able to successfully build a state. In both of its areas of operation, there is a conducive operating environment for influence, which makes it more likely for them to convert their power into a permanent state. Both Syria and Yemen are in a civil war, and Iraq is very unstable and having trouble fending-off ISIS. AQAP and ISIS have had sovereign authority over its held territories and implemented effective governance. It also set up institutions to improve its governance and placed emphasis on religious teachings, improving infrastructure, and controlling territory. Nevertheless, both have taken different approaches to governing its people and holding territory, and neither have been successful in establishing an Islamic State.

With this said, it is not out of the realm of possibilities that AQAP or ISIS would be able to achieve its state in a form like the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs) in Pakistan. After the fall of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban became the rulers within the country. They were able to eventually control Kabul along with the majority of the countryside. The Taliban was able to implement a strict form of Sharia Law, where women and girls were not able to go to

²³⁹ "Yemen's Water Scarcity Problem." World Policy Blog, July 14, 2015
<http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2015/07/14/yemens-water-scarcity-problem>.

school and were banned from working. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was also recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It was not recognized by the UN. The Taliban's rule fell after US forces invaded Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Using this example if Yemen or Iraq were to continue to diminish, and the both respective governments continued to weaken, it could be possible that the terrorist's organizations could set up a governance structure that would be respected.

The FATAs are an area in Pakistan that is governed directly through the Frontier Crime Regulations. The FATAs are comprised of seven tribal districts around Peshawar and are made up of ethnically Pashtuns. While the region is controlled by the Pakistani government, they have an appointment governor who has federal authority in the area and are semi-autonomous. The FATAs also do not fall under the Jurisdiction of Supreme Court and High Court of Pakistan. Because the FATAs are still a part of Pakistan, but have its own authorities, this is something that AQAP and ISIS might be able to attain. From the research and data shown above it is unlikely that they will be able to create its own state, but due to the decreasing stability, particularly in Yemen, if AQAP were able to acquire enough people and territory it might be able to have similar authority.

AQAP's control over Mukalla and decision not to tax the people, instead taxing goods going through the port, was supported by the citizens of Mukalla. Yet, the different states and businesses that used the port were angered by the high taxes, and eventually counterterrorism forces were sent in to liberate the city. ISIS instead heavily taxed its citizens, causing discontent towards the group in its held territory. Neither group has

taken an inclusive approach to governance or placed emphasis the needs and desires of the citizens.

ISIS has also placed emphasis on holding territory, where AQAP has prioritized keeping its institutions in place. In both cases, forces came to liberate the cities from terrorist control. This will be a continuing problem for AQAP and ISIS if they maintain the same stringent ideology. Forces will continue to come and liberate the cities.

Conclusion

This thesis has helped to answer the questions of how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy and how influential jihad strategists are, whether al-Qaeda's uses dissuasion by denial as a deterrence strategy and who do they see as its enemies, and finally can al-Qaeda and other Salafi Jihadist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), attain its goal of establishing the Caliphate. The importance of understanding these questions is that it helps to understand the broader discourse of al-Qaeda and how its strategy to spread influence and build a caliphate is created. The first two chapters are examined through the eyes of al-Qaeda, while the third is the overarching chapter that argues that it would be very unlikely that a Salafi Jihadist group would achieve its goal of building a Caliphate. The first chapter determines al-Qaeda's geostrategy and the impact of jihad strategist. The goal of its geostrategy was aimed at establishing the Caliphate. Al-Qaeda's goal in the second chapter is to deter its adversaries so it can have more power and influence to establish the Caliphate. Therefore, since the goal of both of the first two chapters was aimed at building the Caliphate, the third chapter examined the plausibility that al-Qaeda and other Salafi Jihadist groups could achieve its goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate.

The first chapter proves that jihadi strategists as well as its strategic culture have had a profound impact on al-Qaeda's post 9/11 geostrategy. Because of the decentralization and secretiveness of the group, it can be difficult to disseminate strategy. This allows jihad strategists the ability to influence geostrategy, and it makes the creation

of geostrategy individualistic. Therefore, one can trace jihad strategists' geostrategies to particular affiliates.

The implications of understanding the literature created by jihad strategists is that one can now conceptualize and understand how al-Qaeda forms its geostrategy and that its ideology is the main driver for its hatred towards the United States. Al-Qaeda has gone through great strides to try to understand how the United States thinks and creates its strategy. By understanding how al-Qaeda creates its geostrategy and what its geostrategy is, it helps allow for better methods to counter the group's ideology.

The second chapter deciphers al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy and helps to give a baseline of where al-Qaeda draws the line in terms of attacks, as well as what al-Qaeda is hesitant of. Al-Qaeda has shown that they are willing and have the religious justification to use CBRN weapons against the west, but they do not use their acquisition of CBRN as a deterrent. The group does, however, use terrorist attacks as a strategy of dissuasion by denial.

Additionally, where al-Qaeda draws the line comes from one of its primary concerns of getting lambasted by the media. While the media serves as a platform for promoting al-Qaeda's ideology, it can also hurt al-Qaeda's image because it broadcasts the atrocities associated with al-Qaeda's attacks. CBRN in particular receives very bad media attention because of the psychological effect associated with them. Too gruesome of attacks can turn potential converts against al-Qaeda.

Understanding al-Qaeda's deterrence strategy also has important implications for the US. The first is that it is very unlikely that al-Qaeda will be a CBRN threat because

the US and al-Qaeda are of different rationalities and the US would not trust al-Qaeda to abstain from using the weapons. Therefore, the acquisition of CBRN would not be a strong deterrent against the United States. Terrorist attacks, however, carry more weight because of the psychological toll that it takes on the American population.

The third chapter argues that ISIS and AQAP have not successfully built a state based on the needed characteristics in the literature review. AQAP is unlikely to be able to form a true state because they do not have a strong enough military force to protect its interests and also rely on providing goods and services to the local population to promote its ideology. ISIS, however, started off its state building efforts strong. When they first started acquiring territory, they improving essential infrastructure and eradicating criminals and drug lords from its area. As ISIS continued to control territory, its brutality became more evident and frequent and they increased taxes on its citizens. This caused greater discontent within its territory and people have started to want to leave its control.

For both AQAP and ISIS counterterrorism regimes have made an impact on why the groups have not been able to establish a full-fledge state. This has affected its ability to control territory for a period longer than a year and a half. Coalition strikes have also hampered the group and forced its members further underground.

There are also gaps of knowledge in this thesis that need to be addressed. As mentioned in chapters one and two there has not been a lot of academic research conducted on al-Qaeda's geostrategy, and even less on its deterrence strategy. Therefore, the author relied on primary sources written by jihad scholars to examine its geostrategy. Deciphering the deterrence strategy was more difficult because there is not a lot of

literature about how al-Qaeda deters its enemies. The third chapter does have more academic research on it, however, it is a very controversial topic on whether ISIS in particular has established a State.

Overall, this thesis provides a framework on how to better counter al-Qaeda on the ideological level. Knowing the importance that individual scholars played on creating its geostrategy can help the U.S. better understand the way they think and its actions. If we can put their strategy and thoughts into context, we will be better equipped to counter them. Additionally, a CBRN attack on US soil, while possible, would not be very likely due to the history of emphasizing explosives. Instead the biggest threats come from strategically timed attacks that could affect US policy decisions, such as those of the Madrid bombing in 2004. Finally, when looking at how al-Qaeda and ISIS are trying to build its Caliphate one can see that there is an opportunity in the destabilized region for them to prosper. They have also been able to embed themselves in the local population and gain support. However, the group's inability to keep territory, with its waning support from the population, show that they have not attained statehood and it would be very unlikely for them to do so in the future.

When looking at this thesis holistically, one can see that there are certain strengths of al-Qaeda that set itself apart from other Salafi Jihadist organizations as well as certain vulnerabilities that can be exploited to better counter the group. The table below outlines these findings.

Al-Qaeda Strengths	Al-Qaeda Vulnerabilities	Opportunities to Counter
Embedding in local population	Media	Counter propaganda campaigns
Strategic thinkers, Pragmatism	Death of senior leaders	Continuous regional counterinsurgency campaigns
Operating environment susceptible to jihad	Decentralized structure	De-radicalization programs
Decentralized structure		

Table 2: Implications and Conclusions

Al-Qaeda's strengths are that it has been able to embed itself in the local population and be a protector of Sunni Muslims. This is shown especially by AQAP and their ability to infiltrate the different tribes in Yemen. AQIM and the al-Nusrah Front also have had success in this. Secondly, al-Qaeda's strategic thinkers are pragmatic and experienced. They lived through and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, as well as studied under many of the Muslim Brotherhood ideologues in Egypt. Thirdly, because of the instability in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, there is now a more favorable environment for the affiliates to operate in. Many of the conditions that al-Suri noted in his book are met because of the civil wars and conflicts in the areas. Lastly, the decentralization of al-Qaeda is both a strength and vulnerability. It is a strength because it is now harder to infiltrate the group and understand their operations and strategy.

The decentralization of al-Qaeda is also a vulnerability because it makes it more difficult to implement an overarching strategy and to maintain control over its affiliates. This compounded with the death of senior leaders makes the group less effective. Even though when a senior leader is killed, there is another one ready to take his place, the loss of continuity can affect operations. Al-Qaeda's susceptibleness to the media is also

echoed by al-Suri, Naji and Zawahiri's writings about the different ways to manipulate the media, and how the media portrays Jihad in an unfavorable light. It was also shown that al-Qaeda takes the media into consideration when trying to use CBRN for offensive purposes.

Knowing al-Qaeda's strengths and vulnerabilities allows for better opportunities to counter the group. One opportunity that would help debilitate the group and exploit their battle with the media would be to improve counter propaganda campaigns. Al-Qaeda and ISIS both have magazines and publications that they use to promote Jihad. Having more effective counter propaganda campaign would weaken al-Qaeda's legitimacy in its strongholds.

Additionally, having de-radicalization programs in these areas would also be beneficial.

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